



*"Let God Prevail"*

## Show Notes & Transcripts

### Podcast General Description:

followHIM: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Wednesday.

### Podcast Episode Descriptions

#### Part 1:

**Brother Mike Harris asks: Is Genesis more than a love story?** A closer reading of the Hebrew text and well scene uncovers a covenant story about Jesus and His covenant people.

#### Part 2:

Jacob and Esau: a familiar story with an unfamiliar meaning. Brother Mike Harris explores Genesis 24-33, offering new insight into rivalry, covenant, and reconciliation.

### Timecodes:

#### Part 1 -

- 00:00 Part 1 - Brother Mike Harris
- 00:05 Teaser

- 05:40 Bio
- 07:03 Come, Follow Me Manual
- 08:51 How does God bless family?
- 11:48 President Oaks reflects on losing his wife
- 15:33 Multiply and replenish
- 18:46 Land indicated covenant
- 22:51 Agency is honored
- 24:55 The land is symbol of heaven
- 29:17 Elder Holland giving his life for the Lord
- 31:43 Camels and covenant marriage
- 33:56 God blesses through covenant
- 35:28 The well motif and covenant marriage
- 41:11 Elder Bednar: Covenant connection
- 44:18 Who says, "I will go?"
- 46:24 Terrible movies and the language of symbolism
- 49:59 Damsel and covenant Israel
- 54:33 The covenant is joyous
- 57:04 Lifting up their eyes
- 58:28 Book of Mormon parallels
- 1:03:07 Rebekah and Isaac meet
- 1:08:51 Sarah dies
- 1:12:10 End of Part 1 - Brother Mike Harris

## Part 2 -

- 00:00 Part 2 - Brother Mike Harris
- 00:22 Does God play favorites?
- 03:36 Twin drama
- 07:02 Both sons are important
- 09:59 Roles of the firstborn
- 14:37 The pottage portion of the program
- 20:09 God's children inherit all
- 22:04 A terrible trade
- 28:24 A mystery solved
- 33:04 A Book of Mormon parallel
- 34:58 Who is waiting for Jacob?
- 38:38 Jacob prepares for the worst
- 46:35 A temple experience
- 49:29 Sides, thighs, and questions
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- 56:16 Jacob implores Esau to return to the covenant
- 59:13 Reconciliation and hope
- 1:06:47 Rachael and Leah are witnesses
- 1:11:12 End of Part 2 - Brother Mike Harris

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## Biographical Information:



I served a mission in Torreón, Mexico. After returning home, I attended BYU, where I earned a B.A. in Spanish and a minor in Family Science. I have two M.A. degrees—one in Curriculum Development and the other in Old Testament Biblical Studies, and I'm currently a Ph. D. candidate in Old Testament studies at Amridge University.

I taught seminary for 20 years and have worked at the Utah Valley Institute of Religion for the past nine years. I have taught as an adjunct instructor in the religion department at BYU.

My wife, Klea, is from Alberta Canada. We first met in 1997 while teaching seminary—she Pleasant Grove High School and I at Orem Junior High. We both insist it was love at first sight.

We have six children ages 15 to 27 (the oldest two were adopted from Haiti), all who are fifth generation Oremites, and we are delighted to have one grandson.

Klea is an estate planning attorney and runs her own firm. When life gets heavy, we highly recommend our therapists: Jim Gaffigan and Brian Regan. I subscribe to the keto diet, except when hanging out with my buddies Ben and Jerry. For fun, I enjoy Scrabble and playing pickleball.

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## Let God Prevail PART 1



GUEST: BROTHER MICHAEL HARRIS

- Hank Smith: 00:00:00 Coming up in this episode on FollowHIM.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:00:04 You got the 10 camels and Rebekah and her damsels on it. Then when they get closer, they're gonna see Isaac walking in the field and then you're going to have the marriage. They encounter love at first sight and people read these and they're like, oh, it's a romantic love story. And it is, but it's so much more.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:31 Hello everyone. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I'm your host. I'm here with my co-host. He's been my co-host for over five years. Those five years have seemed unto me just a few days John Bytheway. John, welcome back. Another episode of followHIM. Just a few days. Do you know where that comes from, John?
- John Bytheway: 00:00:55 Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:55 It comes from Genesis 29, verse 20 where Jacob served seven years for Rachel. But those seven years it says seemed to him, but a few days, for the love he had to her. Isn't that beautiful John? We are privileged today to be joined by Brother Mike Harris. Mike, welcome to followHIM. This is your first time here.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:01:19 Thank you for having me gentlemen.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:20 We are excited to have you. Comes highly recommended. I'd heard of Mike before, but when my nephew Chad Savage came to me, he said, I have a guest for you, it's my all time favorite teacher I've ever had, Mike Harris. Chad and his wife Taysia. They are gonna be very excited. John, we've been walking through these opening chapters of Genesis for a while now. When you think of Jacob, the prophet Jacob, not Book of Mormon, but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, what comes to mind?
- John Bytheway: 00:01:52 So much of all we talk about is Jacob's posterity, his name being changed to Israel and the House of Israel and in these chapters I

think about marriages and the importance of that for Isaac and Rebekah. We all look back to Jacob and talk about that a lot, don't we? About Israel and the House of Israel and let God prevail.

Hank Smith: 00:02:12 Yeah. This initial family, how many times do we hear the phrase Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and here we are in these stories. Mike, what are you looking forward to today? I know when you and I discussed this, this is something you really wanted to do.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:02:27 Yeah, thank you so much. Genesis chapters 24 to 33 dives into the messiness of families, of heartache and shattered dreams, betrayal. It's just so relevant for our day. We love families, we sing families can be together forever, but the reality of it is sometimes it can be so hard. The betrayal, addictions, things that destroy family, home can be heaven on earth. But let's be honest, sometimes it can be hell on earth. And as I go through these chapters and preparing for this podcast with you fine gentlemen, I just get this feeling that the Lord is aching to help us to know how to navigate through all this messiness.

Hank Smith: 00:03:23 And Genesis does not shy away from the messiness.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:03:27 No.

Hank Smith: 00:03:27 Of all scripture.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:03:29 I have a friend. You know how the church is trying to compile an international hymn book. He told me that there's one hymn in particular that they're really struggling with and it's hymn 301 in the English hymn book. I Am a Child of God and I'm, why would you struggle with that? That's a no brainer. You don't even have to pray whether or not that needs to be in the Hymn book. And he says, no, no, no. Yeah, the chorus is money. I am a child of God. There's a phrase in there it's for some people really painful. The part says, has given me an earthly home with parents kind and dear, which implies that God sent you to that family. Well then that's all fine and dandy. You're gonna sing that with gusto if you come from a family that is kind and dear. But what if they're not?

Hank Smith: 00:04:17 I've heard that before from people. They, what if that's not me? Well then this lesson is for you. Let's talk about it.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:04:25 Not too long ago, I was going on a walk with one of my neighbors. I've known him for decades. I think he's one of the three Nephites. He is just as committed as anybody I know in

the kingdom. But he said something that surprised me. He said, Mike, I feel like I'm losing my faith. I'm like, somebody with his calling and election made sure will not lose his faith. What are you talking about? He says, no, he says, I've been reading the Old Testament, every time I read the Old Testament, I feel like I'm losing my faith. There's just so many things that are so odd and shocking. The Lord repeatedly and emphatically says, Jacob I loved but Esau I hated. And you're like, there's some tricky things and we want to be able to approach the text and interpret it in a responsible, faithful manner. And I think we can talk about some tools that can help us do that.

- Hank Smith: 00:05:20 Ah, wonderful. I love it. Let's read exegetically.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:05:23 That's the word. Yes.
- Hank Smith: 00:05:25 Speaking of hymns, my wife and I sometimes sing that there is beauty all around when there's no one home. Okay. Yeah. John, tell us about Mike. What do we know about him?
- John Bytheway: 00:05:40 Brother Mike Harris. He's been teaching at [Utah Valley University Institute](#) for the past nine years. He served a mission in, I am so excited to say this, Torreon Mexico. How'd I do? And after returning home attended BYU, he earned a bachelor's in Spanish, a minor in family science. He has two master's degrees, one in curriculum development and the other in wait for it, Old Testament biblical studies. And he's currently a PhD candidate in Old Testament studies at Amridge University and he's taught in seminaries and institutes for the past 20 years. His wife Klea from Alberta, Canada. Yay. He met her while they were both teaching seminary in 1997. She was at Pleasant Grove High School and he was at Orem Junior High. They both insist it was love at first sight, so this is perfect 'cause we're gonna have some marriages here in these chapters. They have six children, been married for 27 years. Klea is an estate planning attorney, which also gets into families trying to help them make things not messy. He says, I subscribe to the keto diet except when hanging out with my buddies, Ben and Jerry. For fun I enjoy Scrabble and playing pickleball. What a delightful background and notice how much family is in there. Welcome Mike.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:03 This is going to be fun, I think we found the perfect guest to talk about the messiness of families and yet here's the Lord working through this family. Let's start with the [Come, Follow Me](#) manual, then Mike, John and I are ready to learn. The name of the lesson this week is Let God Prevail. How do you secure for yourself a blessing from God? You might say that the account of Jacob, grandson of Abraham and Sarah is the story of a man

who learned the answer to that question. In a culture where the firstborn son received a birthright blessing, Jacob was born second, grasping the heel of his twin brother, Esau. The name Jacob means "supplanter", one who replaces someone else. Jacob lived up to that name by trying more than once to supplant Esau as inheritor of the birthright blessing because Esau was unworthy of it.

00:07:56 The result was discord in the family and Jacob had to flee for his life into the wilderness. Years later, God commanded Jacob to return home. On the way, Jacob, in humility, again sought a blessing from God. The scriptures described this time as a wrestle for Jacob and he declared that he would not give up except thou bless me. Then came the lesson and the blessing. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, meaning, among other things, let God prevail. Israel learned that to receive God's most valuable blessings, his covenant blessings, it's not necessary to supplant someone else. His blessings aren't purchased or seized or won. He gives them freely to all who live up to the name of Israel, who let God prevail in their lives. So well written. Alright with that, Mike, where do you want to start?

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:08:51 How exactly does God bless family? Yes, faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work and wholesome recreational activities bring blessings, but there's something else that's really critical. That's my favorite part of the Proclamation to the World on the Family. You have this solemn tone of the proclamation and at the very end

John Bytheway: 00:09:16 and then,

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:09:16 and play pickleball.

Hank Smith: 00:09:18 Yeah, get out there and do things.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:09:21 That just endears my heart to my Heavenly Father. As silly as this might sound, he wants me to have fun. That's the God I believe in. Yes, all those things are so crucial if we wanna have a happy home. But like I said, there's something else. So let's dive in verse one. Genesis chapter 24, verse one. We're gonna find something here unexpected. In fact, in preparing for this podcast, I'd never seen this before. It says here, and Abraham was old and well stricken in age and the Lord had blessed... That's what we want, right? We wanna be blessed, blessed Abraham in all things. Wait a minute though. Really? I know we're supposed to count our blessings, but just for a second, humor me, at this moment in Abraham's life, let's count his non blessings. Okay right there even in the text itself, he's old.

There's some nice things about being old, but typically when I wanna get out of a chair, now I gotta be one for the money, two for the show, you know, and I gotta... There's some problems there, and then not, it's like doubling down on it. The next phrase well stricken in age. What? It wasn't okay just to say he was old? Why is it emphasizing that? I did a search every time that phrase appears it's never good. Real quick.

00:10:52 In 1 Kings chapter one verse one, David, he's stricken in age and it says, and David gat no heat. In the New Testament, Elizabeth and Zacharias are stricken in years and they've suffered much grief and they can't have any children. Gideon in the Book of Mormon, it says that he's stricken with many years. He wasn't able to withstand the blows of Nehor and so he got killed. Even Sariah and Nephi, they're on the boat and it says that same phrase, appears they're stricken in years. So they weren't able to calm Laman and Lemuel down when they were acting with exceeding rudeness and they were about ready to be buried with their gray hairs into a watery grave. This verse is emphasizing, you know, in the ancient Hebrew text, there's no chapter divisions. The verse right before verse one here, if we go to chapter 23, verse 20, what's happened?

00:11:48 He just buried his wife and people mean well and they say things. It's like, well, you know, it was her time. She lived a good long life and for the righteous, there's no sting. But you know what? I don't know. I think for a good person who righteous and truly has loved, oh, death stings. In fact, I was reading [President Dallin H. Oak](#)'s book, it's called Life Lessons Learned. He gives sweet tender insight into what it was like when his first wife died. He said, quote, when we lose a spouse, we are usually unaware how deeply wounded we are for a time. We do not function well physically or mentally. We should not make major decisions until we are mostly whole again. The required time will differ. For me it was, and this blows my mind, here he is a special witness of Christ and what does he say. For me, it was about a year before I could trust myself with a major personal decision. I think Abraham, yes, he knows that his wife's gonna be resurrected. They can be together forever, but I think there's a lot of hurt going on right now and loneliness and just ache.

Hank Smith: 00:13:04 Mike, I remember when Sister Hinckley passed away, [President Hinckley](#) in the next conference says, I was at her bedside as she slipped peacefully into eternity, as I held her hand and saw mortal life drain from her fingers I confess I was overcome. Before I married her she had been the girl of my dreams to use the words of a song then popular. She was my dear companion for more than two thirds of a century, my equal before the Lord,

really my superior. And now in my old age, she has again become the girl of my dreams. Wow.

- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:13:45 Could you hit me in the feels?
- Hank Smith: 00:13:47 Yeah.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:13:48 That's how I feel about my wife Klea. Yeah. Beautiful. We're not done counting our non blessings. There's more. I know there's a lot here in verse one. It's pretty dense. He's been promised repeatedly that he and his posterity would inherit the land of Canaan. Yet it was all that Abraham could do back in Genesis 23 to purchase a parcel of land to have his wife buried. Remember the Lord promised him that he would receive the entire land. It says, look north, look south, look east, look west. It's all gonna be yours. We're not just talking an acre or two. He can barely get a small piece of land for his wife's burial. You've received a patriarchal blessing or a priesthood blessing and you've been promised something and it's not happening. Abraham understands. We're not done counting our non blessings here he was promised posterity as numerous as the sand, the dust and the stars. Yet his son Isaac isn't married. He's not even dating. In fact, when Isaac gets on dating apps, he's not swiping to the right, he's not swiping up because he's living in the middle of Canaan where all the candidates, the dating prospects are, they're idol worshipers. He's spending Friday night at home.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:16 John, it reminds me of when the Lord says, I will bless you and then you usually quote the Princess Bride, I will bless you. You keep using that word.
- John Bytheway: 00:15:27 I don't think it means what you think it means. Yeah. Yeah, I'm not seeing it the same way.
- Hank Smith: 00:15:33 I'm not seeing blessings the way you are.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:15:35 Here in verse one, it says, the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. The Hebrew word behind blessed is baruk. As you look at how it's used here in these opening chapters of Genesis, it's repeatedly connected explicitly to multiplying and replenishing the earth. In Genesis chapter one, the Lord creates the beast of the field and he commands them. He blesses them and then immediately commands them to multiply and replenish. And in verse 26, the same thing with Adam and Eve. Then in Genesis nine verse one, Noah blesses his sons and then commands them to multiply and replenish it. You see it over and over again. Abraham's like, where's the blessing? The posterity as

numerous as the sands of sea. It's not happening. It says at the end of verse one that Abraham was blessed in all things. The Hebrew behind that, and I don't think this appears anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. It's hakol, that means the all or the everything. If you were to translate it literally from the Hebrew, but no English versions translate it that way, they'll all say he was blessed in everything or in all things or in all ways. It's conveying this idea that he Abraham is being blessed in all facets conceivable, yet this is so contradictory. Wait a minute. Really?

- Hank Smith: 00:17:07 The most read verse in the Book of Mormon is I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in the learning of my father and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, and then his next phrase, yea, having been highly favored of the Lord. Like, wait, what? In one verse teaches the exact same thing that apparently the Lord sees blessings as opportunities to grow.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:17:38 Yeah, we have to keep reading to figure out what is the text trying to get across. And Hank, that's a beautiful cross reference. What does Abraham do to bless his family? You just read your scriptures, go to church, say your prayers. You know, of course he does, but he does something else. In chapter 24, as we go through here, verse by verse is gonna give some hints, some clues along the way to show us how we can really bless our family. Let's go to verse two. 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. Verse three, and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth that thou shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but thou shall go unto my country, that's about 500 miles up north to Harran, modern day Turkey, and to my kindred and take a wife unto my son, Isaac. When you read that, you might be thinking, why not just send Isaac himself?
- 00:18:46 I would suggest this that throughout the Old Testament, leaving the land of Canaan is often equated with living outside the covenant blessings. Like you recall, they'd had to go to Egypt for a while 'cause of the seven years of famine. While they're there, Jacob or Israel, he's about ready to die and he requires his son, Joseph. Joseph with the coat of many colors to take an oath. You make sure you bury my bones in Canaan. And then Joseph goes to die also there in Egypt and he puts his people under oath. Solemn oath. You make sure that you bury my bones in Canaan suggesting this theological message that I've got to be in the covenant.

Hank Smith: 00:19:37 That is the promised land.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:19:39 Yeah, so I think for Abraham, it's not worth the risk to have Isaac move outside Canaan and maybe not come back. I think that's what the text is trying to suggest. In fact, look at verse five. And the servant said unto him, peradventure, the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land, again, this land, into the covenant. Must I need to bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? Verse six. And Abraham said unto him, beware that thou bring not my son thither again. It's interesting where it says in verse six, beware that thou bring not my son thither again, meaning thither meaning up there in Harran outside the [covenant](#). To bring comes from the Hebrew word shuv. The root of it simply means to turn. And it's often referred to with repentance where you just turn to the Lord or sometimes it refers to turning away from the Lord, being going apostate. So I think the text is trying to suggest that I don't want my son to turn away from the covenant.

Hank Smith: 00:20:58 Got it. Isaiah named his son Shear-jashub, a portion will return.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:21:05 I didn't think about that. That's beautiful. So to bless our families yes, we need to read scriptures and go to church, say our prayers and play some pickleball. Notice how Genesis 24 is underscoring if we really wanna bless family, we have to have this covenantal focus. The Come, Follow Me manual, that you read Hank at the beginning of the podcast really did a beautiful job. But that's worth repeating. That should be our primary interpretive lens as we go through this chapter. And that is in order for God to fully bless our families, Genesis 24 is inviting us to focus on the covenant.

Hank Smith: 00:21:48 The servant seems to realize how important this is. He says, what if the woman doesn't want to come back?

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:21:55 And you know what's shocking about that Hank is sometimes I hear people say, you know, back in those days, sometimes the Bible can be sexist, you know, and but I'm like, ugh, I always feel a little uncomfortable. I know the culture was, but when you impose that on the scriptures and I sometimes are like, ugh. It gives me pause. I think here's a great example. The agency of the woman is completely being honored when it comes to making covenants with, maybe in the ancient near East. You would be pressured and manipulated to make a treaty or a covenant, not with the Lord, but with the king or a ruler. But when it comes to making covenants or treaties agreements with God, he 100% says, I do not wanna pressure you. This has to

come from you 100%. And you see that being highlighted here in the text. You would not expect that from their culture.

- John Bytheway: 00:22:51 In verse eight, if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt force her? No. Then thou shalt be clear from this my oath, there's consent involved and agency is honored. I'm glad you pointed that out.
- Hank Smith: 00:23:07 Am I reading this right? That he says bring him back? Is that what Abraham is saying to the servant is if the woman doesn't want to come, I want my son come back? Only you will not return my son. There is he saying like, I want him back home.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:23:28 I think what he's saying there in verse six is, Hey, if you can't find a worthy candidate for my son to marry, whatever you do, you can't take my son out of the covenant land. You can't take him from here in Canaan, you can't take him up to Haran. He has to stay in the covenant. That's my dying wish here.
- Hank Smith: 00:23:52 Right. Hmm. So Mike, am I reading this right, that the servant is gonna go find a woman for Isaac to marry, but Isaac is going to stay in Israel in Canaan and the servant is saying, well what if she doesn't want to come here? Abraham's saying, well, okay, if she doesn't wanna come here, then you don't have to find him a wife because no matter what, he's not going there to her.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:24:21 Exactly.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:22 Got it. Okay.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:24:23 I want Isaac to remain here in the land of Canaan, the text is trying to emphasize Isaac has to stay in the land/covenant.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:33 Got it. Because in your mind, the land and the covenant are the same.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:24:39 Yes.
- Hank Smith: 00:24:40 Synonymous in this case.
- John Bytheway: 00:24:42 That's what we're doing. Equating the covenant with the land. I like the way you said it, land/covenant that makes us all go, oh, I see why this is so important here. Not just real estate, it's about the covenant.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:24:55 Yeah. And to build on that idea, you see that in the book of Deuteronomy where it describes, I want to take you to a land

that flows with milk and honey. Well, I've been to Israel, you've been to Israel, modern day Israel, is it known for its milk and honey? Do you like, you gotta try their honey, the book of Deuteronomy is filled with this poetic language. Like if you're faithful to me, when you get there, there will be no disease. None of your [women](#) will suffer from barrenness or infertility. All this hyperbole where clearly throughout the Old Testament, the Lord connects being in the promised land with, it's a type and a shadow of heaven, which is only achieved through obedience and loyalty to the covenant. Now, in our modern day culture, we have friends, family, parents, church leaders that may sometimes pressure us to, hey, you gotta get married in the temple, you gotta get your endowment.

00:25:59      Maybe sometimes a culture, we press too hard. We press, I mean all the pressure, maybe it's not all bad, I mean it's just coming from a good place. But at the end of the day, the text here is we've got to honor the agency of the woman. She's gotta enter into a covenant ultimately if she wants to. And that's true for us today. How about verse seven. Did we see any focus on the covenant here in verse seven? It says, the Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, that would've been back where he grew up, his stomping grounds was in Ur, which is modern day Iran, Iraq area and from the land of my kindred and which spake unto me and that swear unto me saying unto thy seed, will I give this land. He shall send his angel before thee and thou shall take a wife unto my son from thence.

00:26:59      We've got some covenantal connections here in this verse. The first three words, the Lord God, if you look in the Hebrew, typically you first have verbs followed by the subject here and this is a really good translation. It's fronting Lord God. It's placing the Lord God in what we call an emphatic position. I mean, we can kneel next to our bed and we can make promises with God. I promise I'll be a good boy. I promise I'll be a good girl. I'll go to church if you'll just bless me with the, anyway we try to make deals with God. I suppose that's fine, but when it comes to official covenants, we don't stipulate the terms. You see that here where it's the Lord God who's taking the initiative to make things happen. Verse nine, should we keep moving?

Hank Smith:      00:27:57      Yeah, let's keep going.

Bro. Mike Harris:      00:27:59      And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master and swear to him concerning that matter.

John Bytheway: 00:28:08 It looks like the JST in verse two and verse nine is changing thigh to hand.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:28:16 It's interesting in Genesis chapter 47, verse 29, right before Jacob dies in Egypt, he makes Joseph covenant that he'll make sure that his bones are buried in Canaan. Like I was saying earlier, he tells him to put his hand under his thigh and there's no JST. I find this interesting because we know anciently, that penalty for [oath](#) breaking, especially in the ancient near East. If you broke your treaty, your covenant with the king or the ruler, what's the penalty? Death. This seriousness is being underscored by placing his [hand](#) under Abraham's loins. That part of the body associated with lineage. This dramatically captures the serious and sacred nature of an oath.

Hank Smith: 00:29:09 It's definitely one of those, the past is a foreign country. They do things differently there, right? Like, oh, okay, interesting.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:29:17 I don't know how to best teach this to those that we love that are preparing to go to the temple, but I mean it's just so sad when people go to the temple and it's a one and done. I remember [Elder Holland](#) was speaking with the media once and one of the reporters asked, so Elder Holland, would you give your life for the church? And he thought about it and he said, well, that's what I thought I was doing.

Hank Smith: 00:29:44 Yeah, I'm pretty sure that's...

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:29:47 The covenant isn't like a part-time deal. Like, okay, on Sunday I'm gonna be a good boy, a good girl, I'm gonna go to church. Now this is 24/7, 365. None of us do it perfectly well, but we're striving all the time to be all in. Maybe our listeners have heard this before, it's kind of humorous, but at the same time it gets the point across.

00:30:09 The story goes that the hen and the pig were in the barnyard talking about the difference between commitment and involvement. To get his point across the pig said to the hen, tomorrow morning when the farmer comes out for breakfast, you are only involved but I'm committed. You're gonna give some eggs, but I'm bacon. Fortunately today, for most of us, it's not a life or death situation in when we keep our covenants, but the Lord expects us to daily strive to be all in. You get that seriousness being communicated by this covenant making going on. It's not just the land that is equated with the covenant. Let's go to verse 10 now, and the servant took 10 camels of the camels of his master and departed for all the goods of his master were in his hand and he arose and he went to

Mesopotamia unto the city of Nahor, these camels and the goods, you get the impression that he's gonna load up these camels and most Bible scholars will say, oh, you need 10 camels because you gotta carry all these goods which can serve as the bride price or the dowry.

00:31:43 You also need supplies for the journey. I mean, to travel 500 miles, you're gonna need a month or two. Reading it through that historical lens I think is helpful and correct. I think there's some symbolism going on at the same time. The phrase the goods comes from the Hebrew word *tuv* which occurs 32 times in the Old Testament. This is the first time it appears. If you survey every time it appears, guess what you see appearing over and over again. Not every time but repeatedly. *Tuv* refers to the material and the spiritual blessings that can come from living in the land that flows with milk and honey. The *tuv* or these goods that he's carrying. It's almost like this symbol, this token that this servant's gonna carry up and show the woman that's gonna marry Isaac. Look, we're looking for a covenant marriage. Look at the blessings here. Look at the tangible blessings. These material blessings. These aren't just because he is good at investing in the stock market. This is evidence that God is blessing him. Now, I don't wanna be misunderstood. We don't wanna promote the prosperity gospel. Like if you keep my commandments, you're gonna get a pay raise. That doesn't always happen. Here the text is using the material goods to symbolize that God is prospering Abraham.

Hank Smith: 00:33:17 These goods aren't just, hey, we gotta go up and buy this daughter from somebody. You're basically taking a member of their household like an employee, someone who does work. So you're gonna go and say, hey, we want to take this person from your family. Here's the payment for it. Also, you're saying the goods aren't just for that purpose. It's also proof that they are in a covenant relationship with God in Canaan. Like, look what we have. I'm bringing a portion of this. This is like a sample of what life is like back home.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:33:56 I think that's a good summary. So as you go through here and you see the camels and you see the goods, I'd look at as a token or evidence of the covenant. Verse 11 also strikes at the heart of this covenant. Here we go, verse 11, and he, the servant made his camels to kneel. To kneel also comes from that Hebrew word *baruk* to bless. You got this beautiful sound play where the text has this beautiful overtones. I the Lord want to bless. I'm not trying to suggest that, that the camels are kneeling down to worship or praise the Lord. It is just a Hebrew sound play to emphasize that throughout this text that God

wants to bless through the covenant. Verse 11, and he made the 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. For the Hebrew listeners, when they hear camels kneeling, they're gonna hear that word baruk and they're think, oh blessing. It's a literary device signaling that God's blessings are about to break forth. They're about to unfold. This is the moment.

Hank Smith: 00:35:20

So like the camel's kneeling are a sign of readiness for this significant encounter.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:35:28

Yeah, and you could only hear that if you are listening to it in the original Hebrew because of that baruk word play. We've gotta talk about the type scene of the well of water or the spring of water. It's a common motif or theme in the scripture canon. We also have it not only here with Isaac and Rebekah, but we have it with Jacob and Leah and Rachel. We have it with Moses and Zipporah. We also have Jesus and the Samaritan woman. These encounters, all of these encounters at the well have five plot elements. One, a groom journeys to a foreign land. Two, he encounters a girl or girls at a well. Three, someone draws water, four, girl runs home to announce the visitor's arrival. And five, a visitor is invited to a meal. I gotta give credit to [Joan Cook](#), who wrote a great article entitled Wells, Women and Faith, where she unpacks this motif. There's intentional symbolism going on. The best commentary that shows that this is intentional symbolism is found in modern Latter-day Saint scripture. In Doctrine and Covenants Section 63 verse 23. It says, the Lord told Joseph Smith, unto him that keepeth my commandments, I will give the mysteries of my kingdom and the same shall be in him a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. The text is trying to tell us, wow, these people at this spring aren't just thirsty. They are [righteous](#). They are covenant individuals that love the Lord.

Hank Smith: 00:37:21

It makes me wanna speak Hebrew 'cause you would see that with the camel's kneeling, the well is a symbol of God's blessings. Something significant from God is about to happen.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:37:33

It's not just about a marriage between a mortal man and a woman, Isaac and Rebekah. It's also about it should point our minds to the marriage that the Lord wants with his people. Covenant Israel. This marriage motif between the Lord and his people is all throughout the Bible. The 10 virgins, five are wise five are foolish. We know that the bridegroom is Jesus and the virgins symbolize the church members.

- Hank Smith: 00:38:03 It's over and over. It's in the one chapter of Isaiah that Jesus quotes to the Nephites. It's Isaiah 54 about the husband who is looking for his wife over and over in scripture is this. He is the groom Israel. Both men and women are the bride and we'll keep seeing it. All this year.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:38:26 And even Paul, he repeatedly stated, when referring to the Adam and Eve story in the Garden of Eden, the way he reads it is, Adam is a symbol for Jesus and Eve, a symbol for the church or covenant Israel. Let's look at one more verse and then we'll quickly summarize the rest of the chapter and then jump to the exciting conclusion. We can't skip verse 12, check this out. Notice the covenant. He the servant said, O Lord, God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, pray thee comes from the Hebrew ana, which a better translation is please, please send me good speed this day and shew what? kindness unto my master Abraham. Any guesses what the Hebrew is behind kindness?
- Hank Smith: 00:39:24 I know this one. The word here is hesed, and four years ago, one of my friends, Hillaree Wright, she said to me, what is hesed? You guys bring it up all the time. Every lesson I hear hesed this and hesed that. Mike, can you teach us?
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:39:43 Yeah, [President Nelson](#) talked about it a lot. I think we can summarize it by saying that hesed is covenant loyalty. It's not just the loyalty that we should show to God, but it's also the loyalty that he shows to us. It goes both ways. We know that even when we're stinkers, he still has hesed. He still stays loyal. Even if we're cheating on him, he doesn't cheat on us. The covenant stays intact.
- Hank Smith: 00:40:17 It's a beautiful tender way to describe it. Husband and wife, she keeps leaving him for other men and he still loves her. It's tender, it's painful. Maybe it's describing the pain that he feels when Israel goes after other gods.
- John Bytheway: 00:40:36 People have helped me think of the covenant. You know how often we've said it's a two-way agreement. Well, it is, but, what you've been saying, Mike, this is a relationship and it involves loyalty. I don't feel loyalty to a piece of paper if I signed a two-way agreement in the same way of loyalty to a person. When we think of the loyalty in a marriage that's working and a loyalty God offers us and wants us to offer him, I think it helps a lot to think, oh, it's not the covenant contract. It's a covenant relationship.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:41:11 You remind me of something, my colleague and dear friend, Gary Little at the Utah Valley Institute of Religion. He pointed

out where Elder Bednar has done something interesting. There's been two or three times separate occasions where he's emphasized. He says, you know, I don't really like to say a covenant relationship. I mean, it is a relationship. We use that 'cause that's our world. We can understand relationships, but he says, I prefer to say a covenant connection because you think of our relationships like we've been saying, they're messy and even the best ones, he says, they don't even come close to the reality of how wonderful it's gonna be in the hereafter to have that covenant connection with the Lord. The closest we can get to is to say a covenant relationship, but it's even beyond that. He says, I'm gonna call it a covenant connection. I'm paraphrasing [Elder Bednar](#), but hopefully that gets the point across. It's better than a relationship, as sweet as relationships can be.

- Hank Smith: 00:42:20 I love what we're doing here, Mike, because we've got listeners who one, have been promised, oh, you'll be blessed, and we're going, is this what blessings look like? Look at the difficulty Abraham is going through. Then he's thinking, oh, I want my child to marry in the covenant. Please marry in the covenant, and then sometimes it doesn't happen. Sometimes it does. Sometimes it's wonderful and a child marries in the temple and they return to the temple over and over and over. You get to see the blessings from that. Sometimes a child chooses not to do that. What am I going to do then? How am I going to deal with that? But at the same time, I am keeping my covenants. The Lord is going to be loyal to me. Even if I'm not, we find he's going to be loyal. Should we keep going? What happens? Do they find the girl?
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:43:12 Yeah. Okay. The servant makes the 500 mile journey up to the land and he finds Rebekah, and let's not go into all the details, but long story short, Rebekah decides, yes, I'm gonna be a part of this covenant. I am gonna go back and I'm gonna be married to Isaac. There is one verse that we can't skip. Well, let's let Rebekah speak. She doesn't say a lot, but oh boy. It also points to the power of covenants. What verse is it? It's verse 58, and they called Rebekah and said unto her, wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. And in Hebrew, it's just one word, which this succinct response agrees with the instructions Jesus gave about oath making in 3 Nephi chapter 13, 33 and 37, where he said, quote, thou shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths, but let your communication be what?
- John Bytheway: 00:44:18 Yea yea or

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:44:20 Or nay, nay. And it's the same in our temples today when we make covenants, it's yes and boy, talk about a life-changing moment. It is done with a simple and a sincere yes. As soon as you utter the words in a temple, not words, that single word, yes, you are inviting the Lord to transform your life.

Hank Smith: 00:44:49 Maybe a fun thing to do with my boys would say, who said this quote? I will go, because I guarantee all of them will say, I know that dad.

John Bytheway: 00:44:59 Nephi.

Hank Smith: 00:45:00 That's Nephi, say, actually not this week. It's a teenager. Yeah, it's a young, but it's a girl this time.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:45:08 You can make a pretty good argument that Nephi is actually referring to, if not this exact phrase right here in this specific verse. Nephi continually is drawing upon the brass plates and the Old Testament. That's a Old Testament phrase right there. Now, the moment of moments, they gotta travel back 500 miles. This is really fun. I mean, you got the 10 camels and Rebekah and her damsels on it. Then they get closer. They're gonna see Isaac walking in the field and then you're gonna have the marriage, they encounter love at first sight, and people read these and they're like, oh, it's a romantic love story. And it is, but it's so much more. If we unpack the symbolism. Surprise! Welcome to the Old Testament world.

00:46:05 I'm gonna expose my ignorance. Back in 1995, I went to a movie and it was the worst. It had Tom Hanks in it, and I know it's got a 7.7 ranking on IMDB. The critics all loved it. It's a very popular movie. I'm sure you have heard of it, but it was absolutely the worst. I hated it. I was like so excited because everybody was raving about it. The name of the movie's Apollo 13, it's all done. I'm walking out there. I'll never forget, I turned to my wife and I said, well, that was boring. That was awful. And she looks at me like, are you kidding? What are you talking about? Where were the aliens? And she looks at me. It wasn't sci-fi that was based on a true story and I looked at her. It's, I had no idea that it was, okay, I know I should have known my history, I didn't know! I was expecting a sci-fi and I was bored out of my mind.

Hank Smith: 00:47:10 Didn't understand the genre.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:47:10 Yes genre a hundred percent. I don't wanna exaggerate, but it happens over and over again. When I'm teaching at Utah Valley Institute of Religion, or I've also taught at the BYU Religion

department and in seminary and with my neighbors and friends, they'll read something in the Bible. Typically it's the Old Testament and they're like, I don't get this. Or a lot of times it's with Genesis one, two or three with the endowment and they're like, I'm getting so frustrated, or this doesn't make sense. I'll tell you, 95% of the time, it's because they're reading it through a historical lens. The Bible is not an historical textbook or to quote [President Nelson](#) talking about the Book of Mormon, there is history in it, but it is not a historical textbook. I don't know how to teach that. You know, and I'll tell people, well, it's not a historical book. You've gotta look for symbolism. They still struggle with it, but it will make all the difference if somehow we can shift our interpretive lens and start looking for symbolism in theological messages. If we run a fact checker through everything in the Bible, sometimes we're gonna lose our faith. We're gonna get confused. We're gonna think God's weird and mean. But if we look for how to unpack it through a symbolic lens and identifying the correct genre. Can we give an example on let's do this with the conclusion of Genesis chapter 24.

Hank Smith: 00:48:42 Okay.

John Bytheway: 00:48:42 Symbolism is its own language.

Hank Smith: 00:48:45 At first glance, it just seems like a nice romance between Isaac and Rebekah. Can we try something? I want us to read these verses, but every time we come to something that could be a symbol, I want us to remove the symbol and insert the meaning. For instance, Isaac, he arguably can be a symbol for, let's go back to Genesis chapter 22. Abraham almost sacrifices him on the altar. Isaac, clearly in that context is a symbol for Jesus. I would suggest that we need to carry that symbolism over here, so Isaac, think Jesus, Rebekah, the woman, and Hank, you were referring to this earlier, right? Oh, barren that bearest not, and we know that Rebekah's gonna be barren here, right? Rebekah, according to Isaiah and other passages, she can serve as a symbol for the church or covenant Israel. Now, let's read it through that lens starting in verse 61, Rebekah rose and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels and followed the man, and the servant took Rebekah and went his way.

00:49:59 Now, let's read it symbolically and covenant Israel or the church members arose and her damsels, by the way, the word damsels comes from the Hebrew word na'arah, and I have a colleague and a friend in my PhD studies over in Amridge who just finished his dissertation. He did a survey of, every time the word na'arah appears right here for damsels. Sometimes it refers to

women, sometimes it refers to men, but there's a lot of Hebrew words for boy, girls, lad, damsel, child, and they all come from this Hebrew word na'arah, but sometimes he use other Hebrew words like yeled, which means child. What he noticed after doing this comprehensive word study of na'arah, that it refers to a high status. I would argue that when it says damsels, this is also referring to covenant Israel. These women and they, these covenant members rode upon the camels and again, what are the camels symbolize and all these goods that they're carrying?

00:51:15 The blessings of the covenant.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:51:16 Yep. They're these covenant keepers and they rode upon the camels and followed the man. The Hebrew word for man is eved, which means the servant, the prophets throughout the Hebrew Bible are often called the servants of the Lord. I would say that the servant should be like the prophet, and they followed the prophet, and the servant or the prophet took Rebekah or covenant Israel and went his way. They're on the covenant path. Next verse, and Isaac came from the way of the well, Lahai-roj, for he dwelt in the south country. I'll read it symbolically, and the Lord came from the way of the well, you got this water, this living water and Lahai-roj in the Hebrew means well of life of vision or well of the living and seeing God. Jesus is coming from this well where he can see, he has this vision, oh, and then it says he dwelt in the south country, the south country's the Negev.

00:52:34 It's the southernmost part of Israel, and it's a desert. It's dry. Often in the Old Testament, it symbolizes, yes, you're in the covenant, but it conveys a sense of sadness or loneliness, and Jesus wants to be married or have this covenant connection with his people, and it hasn't happened yet, so I think it's intentional that he's coming from this south country. Before I came on the podcast, I searched, I wouldn't say everywhere, but I did a pretty big search. I'm like, has anybody pointed out, there's probably somebody that's written an article on this, but if any of our listeners know of somebody that's explored this more fully, I'd love to know.

John Bytheway: 00:53:25 I like the parallel. Covenant Israel rode upon covenant blessings, followed the prophet. I like where you're going.

Hank Smith: 00:53:34 Yeah. I have to say, I'm impressed with Rebekah. You know, as you read this chapter, just when he meets her, she's running everywhere, she is moving 300 gallons of water to water these camels. Then when she finds out that this is God's plan for her, she's like, I will go. She leaves her family, I would think probably

not going to see them again. I don't know if they would frequently travel that far, Mike, but that's a long ways to go in that time. She's willing to sacrifice it, leave her family to go and be with Isaac, and that kind of plays into what you're telling us too. We leave everything behind to go meet the Lord as Israel, right as covenant Israel. We leave it all behind to follow the prophet and go meet the groom. In this case, it's Isaac, but the Lord in the symbolism we've been talking about.

- John Bytheway: 00:54:31 I love that.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:54:33 The covenant is joyous, but I love how, if I hear you right, Hank, you're also recognizing that sometimes keeping the covenant, it can be hard for some, it even puts a wedge in the family. I think the Lord acknowledges that as Rebekah's leaving and like you said, are they gonna even see each other again and it's a big commitment.
- Hank Smith: 00:54:58 Yeah. Her family says, thou art our sister, but you go be the mother of thousands of millions.
- John Bytheway: 00:55:07 That's such a great phrase. Thousands of millions.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:11 Go. The Lord said, you leave your mother and father and you cleave to your spouse.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:55:20 Yeah. That doesn't just refer to your mortal parents. Yes, you leave them, but then you need to cleave to your spouse and in the Bible context, your spouse, the spouse for covenant Israel is the bride groom. You cleave to Jesus. Yes, you'll cleave to your mortal spouse, but ultimately we should think, oh, I've got to put Jesus first.
- Hank Smith: 00:55:40 It's such a good lens, Mike, to see. Whenever I see a marriage, especially in the Old Testament, I should be thinking, oh, Jehovah, Israel. Jehovah, Israel, let me see the type there, what I can learn.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:55:54 Bullseye. Verse 63, Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide. He lifted up his eyes and saw and behold the camels were coming, okay, let's reread again. Let's take out the symbols and insert the meaning, and the Lord went out to meditate. Now, the Hebrew word behind meditate only occurs here. Scholars aren't sure what it means, but at the end of the day, they're like, oh, I guess it means he's praying or meditating, but they really don't know. At least I haven't found anybody that's been definitive on it. Jesus is out praying in the field and

throughout the scripture canon field often symbolizes this earth, this world, so he's on the earth now and it's at what time in Earth's history, eventide. It's at the end of times, this is the Second Coming. You can't skip this part. He lifted up his eyes in verse 64, Rebekah later is gonna lift up her eyes, this phrase, lift up her eyes.

00:57:04 We gotta unpack. There's a Bible scholar, good Christian Bible scholar who looked at every time this appeared in the Hebrew and it occurs 50 times, a lot of times in the KJV, you'll see not only lift up your eyes, but sometimes you'll see the phrase, it's translated as cast your eyes. He studied them all and he says, you know what? I've determined that this is a Hebrew idiom that can mean one of two things depending on the genre. If it's a historical text, it means to make a close inspection or to take a close look, but if it's in a prophetic, revelatory genre type of text, then it means, check this out, to have a vision or to have a revelation. Now, stay with me because maybe I'm nerding out too much on this, but this really speaks to my soul. I wonder if that Hebrew idiom carries over into Latter-day Saint restoration scripture in the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price. This phrase, lift up your eyes or cast your eyes. Lo and behold, what do we find? I think this scholar is absolutely right. I don't think he's trying to prove to the world that the Book of Mormon is true, but wow, this is pretty cool.

00:58:28 I should give credit to the scholar. It's by [S.C. Reif](#). If anybody wants to look it up, the title of his article is To Look Up. Now look here in the Pearl of Great Price, Moses chapter one. It says that Moses lifted up his eyes, there's the idiom, unto heaven being filled with the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son calling upon the name of God. What happens? He beheld his glory. He has a vision. He receives a revelation. Lehi, 1 Nephi, chapter eight, the famous iron rod leading to the tree. He says, I cast my eyes round about that perhaps I might discover my family also, but what does he see? He beholds the river of water, a tree and its fruit. He is given this revelatory experience. You see this repeatedly in the Book of Mormon. Nephi and other prophets refer to how the ancient Israel were murmuring, and then they get bitten by the poisonous serpents.

00:59:28 Moses puts the brazen serpent on the pole, and then he says, you need to look, but the phrase is, you need to cast your eyes. That's the idiom here, and if you cast your eyes, then you'll be healed. Now, we can read that historically. Yeah, if you take a peek, come on, dad, you're dying. Just turn your head and take a peek and you won't die. Okay, we can read it that way. I think

the text is trying to say, if you will look to Jesus Christ, receive this fuller revelation, then that's when the healing comes, and you have in Helaman, the Nephi and Lehi in the Book of Helaman. Remember, they're in the Lamanite prison and they think they're gonna be destroyed, but then it says, quote, Nephi and Lehi cast up their eyes as if to behold from whence the voice came and behold, they saw the heavens open and angels came down out of heaven and ministered unto them.

01:00:30 They have this revelation, and then of course we gotta give the example out of 3 Nephi 11 that we've all read. The Nephites also heard a voice, the voice of Elohim, the Father, and it says, and the voice came as if it were out of heaven, and they cast their eyes roundabout for they understood not the voice which they heard. Now, I think here where it says cast eyes roundabout, that's just a historical context. They're like, whoa, what did I just hear? What was that? And they're just trying to make a close inspection. They're trying to figure it out. They're not having a revelation yet. Then notice what, keep reading, and behold, the third time they did understand the voice, which they heard, and it said unto them, behold, my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name, hear ye him.

01:01:20 Verse eight, and it came to pass as they understood, here it is again. The second time, they cast their eyes up again towards heaven and behold, what do they see? A man descending out of it. Then they have this supernal revelatory experience, not to belabor the point, but there's just so beautiful. Same thing in 3 Nephi 17. Jesus, he's been with them for I think three days. They're tired, they're tuckered out, and he says he cast his eyes upon the multitude. He sees that they're tired and he tells them he has to go, and he sees them in tears. I think that's just a historical, he is just looking carefully into their eyes, trying to discern what they're feeling. Notice at the end of the chapter, this same idiom goes from just making a close inspection to a revelatory experience. After he blesses the children one by one, he tells the parents to behold your children, but what did they do instead? It says in verse 24, the parents look to behold their children and they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open and they saw angels descending out of heaven as if it were in the midst of fire. There's other examples, but this phrase, to lift up your eyes or to cast your eyes significantly can point to a revelatory experience, and I think that's exactly what's going on here in Genesis 24.

John Bytheway: 01:02:49 Not in every case perhaps, but in many cases, watch for the phrase, they cast their eyes. What the scholar wrote was that's

indicating a revelatory experience, not just I looked this way and that, but to cast, a revelation is coming.

- Bro. Mike Harris: 01:03:04 Yeah, a revelation or a vision.
- John Bytheway: 01:03:06 A vision.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 01:03:07 Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Back to verse six three, so Isaac went out and to meditate, or the Lord's going out in the field, he's coming to the world at the eventide or at the Second Coming, he lifted up his eyes. So immediately that Hebrew phrase is inviting us as readers to start viewing this through a symbolic, revelatory lens. Or you can read it just historically. That's fine. Like you can picture it. Oh, Isaac like, whoa, those camels, could that be my wife? He's making a close inspection. He's trying to look careful. You can read it historically and that's fine. That's correct, but then I would suggest to our readers or our listeners that we then gotta go to this symbolic way of reading it. Notice three times you have this emphasis of seeing. He lifted up his eyes. He saw and behold this three-peat idea of, I can't believe my eyes.
- 01:04:11 I've been waiting all my life to find the somebody to marry. This is the moment of moments. That verse is just filled with that thrill, that emotion, and then verse 64, and Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. Now let's read it symbolically. This is my new favorite verse. She lighted off the camel, or in other words, if you read other modern Bible versions, they'll say she dismounted off the camel, and that's a good translation. The word lighted comes from the Hebrew word nafal. Nafal means what? It sounds like it means to fall down, literally, but I can just see the 1611 KJV translators, they're like, the camel's about six feet high off the ground. I don't think she's gonna fall down. That would hurt. We can't say she fell off the camel. Let's just say she lighted.
- Hank Smith: 01:05:13 She lighted off. That's what I say when I fell. I lighted down those stairs.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 01:05:20 I just, yeah, you look at all the other Bible versions, NIV, SAV, NRSV, all these really good Bible translations. None of them, unless I'm mistaken, but I don't think they go with, she falls off 'cause it just sounds too weird. But it's not weird if you read it symbolically. When we see Jesus, what are we gonna do? We're gonna fall to the ground. I think that's what the text is trying to tell us. It's 1 Nephi, chapter eight. When they finally get to the tree and the fruit and they partake. Yeah, they fall down. When you're in the presence of the Lord, that's all you can do. You just melt. I love what the septuagint does with this, which is the

Greek version. The word that the septuagint uses means to leap or to jump. She jumps off the camel. I just love that imagery. When we see Jesus again, we are gonna leap for joy. We're just gonna be a puddle of grateful, joyful tears as we fall to the ground, we can't even imagine it. But this text is beautifully trying to convey that imagery.

Hank Smith: 01:06:34

That's fantastic. Seeing this Isaac, Rebekah as Jesus, and Israel transforms the chapter.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:06:40

Verse 65, and 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. Should we unpack the symbolism? 65 for covenant Israel had said unto the servant, the prophet, what man is this that's walking in the field, that earth that has come down to earth to meet us? Who is this? It's the same reaction we got in 3 Nephi 11. They saw a man descending. They thought it was an angel, but like, who's this man descending out of heaven? It's the prophet that explains it is my master, and that's where it clicks for, oh, this is the person I'm gonna marry. But from a symbolic point of like, oh, this is the bridegroom. If this is Jesus appearing in all his glory, what are you and I gonna do?

01:07:50

You're gonna take a veil and you're gonna cover yourself. Now, historically, all Bible commentators will say, oh, this is an ancient near Eastern practice to show modesty, and it indicates that you're gonna get married. You're the bride. That's a legit historical interpretation. Then the text is building on that culture to also point to throughout scripture, when you have a veil on your face, it's to protect you. It signifies that you need to be transfigured so you can withstand the glory and power of God. Verse 66, the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. The prophet is going to give his report of accountability. The prophets are the Lord's right hand man anciently and today. That has always been the pattern. Then it ends with this. I love verse 67, and Hank, this goes back to how you mentioned Isaiah 54. Isaac brought her into his mother's.

01:08:51

Oh man, I just wanna cry. 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. Okay and we can read that historically. It is a beautiful romance. They're married, they're together, finally. And they love each other. It's sweet, it's tender, it's beautiful. But let's read it symbolically. It's the Lord that initiates this, brought us covenant Israel into Sarah's tent. Sarah's tent isn't just some canvas structure to protect us from the wind. In the Hebrew

Bible tent repeatedly refers to the temple or the tabernacle of Moses. And in Isaiah 54 that you were talking about verse one, it says, enlarge the tent. Make room not just so that we can have everybody. I mean, we have almost 400 temples on the earth today. It's not just we want people to go to the temple, but God wants the entire earth to be a temple.

01:10:02 He wants his presence to dwell, and he wants us to dwell here on the earth with him. Ultimately, that's the destiny of earth to become one large temple where God can be with us 24/7. The Savior's bringing us, his bride, into the tent, or I would say his presence. And he took Rebekah, this is beautiful. It doesn't say it, but it's implied. This is the moment where the veil is removed. And to quote Moroni chapter seven, we can see him as he is. She became his wife and he loved her. And this is so beautiful. Isaac was comforted. You'd expect that it would say, and Rebekah was comforted. It's 'cause it's Jesus who's gonna comfort us. He's gonna wipe away all our tears and there'll be no more pain or sorrow. But isn't it so beautiful that yes, of course Jesus is gonna comfort us and all our trials and he'll make up all the unfairness of life to us. I think it's so beautiful that also Jesus in some way that I don't comprehend, he is feeling comforted that we have made this covenant. In fact, as thrilled as we are to be back with him again someday, the text seems to suggest to me that his thrill matches our own, maybe even surpasses it. He becomes comforted.

John Bytheway: 01:11:32 Hmm. It reminds me of the comment he makes in 3 Nephi. Now my joy is full.

Hank Smith: 01:11:40 Seeing this Isaac and Rebekah story as Jehovah and his love for Israel, one thing I noticed that you already hit was Rebekah has to choose this over and over and over. She's never forced to do anything. And it seems that way for us, Israel, the Lord will never force Israel to be the covenant people. You choose to come to me.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:12:06 Your own free will and choice.

Hank Smith: 01:12:08 Coming up in part two.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:12:11 Here's the moment of moments. It gets intense. If this was a movie, the crescendo, the music is building and building, you know those scenes where the armies are charging after it and there's gonna be, it's really intense. It's kind of like that.



## Let God Prevail PART 2

GUEST: BROTHER MICHAEL HARRIS



- John Bytheway: 00:00:01 Welcome to part two with Brother Michael Harris, Genesis 24 to 33.
- Hank Smith: 00:00:07 Mike, this has been fantastic so far. John and I both have our chapter 24 covered in notes. We've had you for a while and have only hit this one chapter, so let's keep going. What else do you wanna look at in this lesson?
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:00:22 There's some problematic, difficult verses we're gonna hit. The Lord repeatedly says that he loves Jacob but hates Esau. I mean, hates, maybe God plays favorites. You're my favorite and I don't like you. I mean, if you read the text at face value, that's what it seems to suggest. It reminds me of a few Christmases ago, my oldest daughter gave me a mug, a present. Here it is. I don't know if our audience can see it. I know most of them are probably just listening, but I'll read it for you. "Dad I love how we don't even need to say it out loud that I'm your favorite child."
- 00:01:14 Louisena, or we call her Lou. She gave it to me. Kids are always like, you're playing favorites. And then the typical parent response, no, I don't have favorites. I love you all. Well, sometimes you might feel like...
- John Bytheway: 00:01:28 There are days.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:01:28 There are days, yeah. In the Old Testament, God declared in Malachi Chapter one, I the Lord loved Jacob and I have hated Esau. Some think that God didn't mean it. They're like, well, what does the original Hebrew say for hated? So I looked it up. It's a good translation. You can say he hated Esau or he scorned him. It still conveys the idea. It's a good translation and it seems like the Lord really means it because he repeated it in the New Testament in Romans chapter 9, verse 13. It says, Jacob, have I loved but Esau have I hated. And if you look at the Greek, it's a good translation. You could say, I've hated Esau, or I've despised or detest Esau. But then some people are like, well, we believe

the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.

Hank Smith: 00:02:30

Yeah. So as long as I don't like it. Yeah.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:02:32

Because people are like, I know God doesn't hate anybody, so there's gotta be a reason. I like how they're looking for that reason. But guess what? Joseph Smith didn't change anything. He was okay with that language. Why is Joseph Smith okay with it? Even the Book of Mormon says in Helaman chapter 15, and we know that's a good translation and I can find at least 12 other occurrences in the Bible where God explicitly says he hates people or an individual, a group of people or an individual. We need to unpack this. We gotta go back to Isaac and Rebekah. They're married and Rebekah and Isaac, what do they want more than anything? They wanna be able to have a family. Rebekah wants to have a child, but she's barren for 20 years and she finally gets pregnant and you would expect her to be like, oh, what a blessing.

00:03:36

But the family drama begins immediately, right? While she's still pregnant. Yeah. Let's go to Genesis 25, verse 22. And the children struggled together within her and she said, if it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. Let's unpack this. Rebekah is pregnant with Esau and Jacob. These are twins, and who's gonna be the firstborn? Esau and then Jacob's gonna be the younger by, I don't know, 30 seconds or whatever it might have been. Notice the word here, and the children struggled. Struggled, comes from the Hebrew word. r-tz-tz That's a violent word. It's a word that is used to describe warfare battles where you're trying to kill your enemy. We see all the time where a woman's pregnant and the baby starts kicking. They're like, oh look, they're kicking and it's all cute and everything. No, the text is explicitly trying to paint a picture that the babies, they wanna kill each other. If you're listening to this in Hebrew, you're whoa. Why are you using that word to describe the babies? This isn't cute kicking around. They're really trying to kill each other. That's really strange. That makes no sense.

Hank Smith: 00:05:05

The [contemporary English version](#), before Rebekah gave birth, she knew she was going to have twins because she could feel them inside her fighting each other. Finally, she asked the Lord why her twins were fighting. These two don't like each other already.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:05:25

I love that you did that, Hank. You can just feel in this verse. So I woke up early and I'm like, okay, well I'm gonna go do some last

second preparation. And I was reading this and I saw something I had never seen before, 22, and the children struggled together within her. So they're trying to kill each other and notice what she does. It's what any good mom would do. This is what your wife does. This is what my wife does. What does she do next? She said, if it be so, why am I thus? A better translation is why is this happening? Why are my kids not getting along? They're supposed to be each other's best friends. I have visions of raising up a righteous posterity where they're going to church, reading scriptures, serving missions right from the get go. They're fighting each other. There's contention all around. This is the worry of any good mother and father for that matter, and you get it right while they're still in the womb. It was just kind of bizarre.

- Hank Smith: 00:06:31 This is a different translation. Not sure how right on it is, but I love it. It's called God's word translation. She says, if it's like this now what will become of me? What is my life gonna be like if this is already how it is?
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:06:49 Yeah. I've been told all my life that the most important thing is for me to be a mother, a covenant keeper, and to raise a righteous, like what? This is not the gospel plan. And that's what Rebekah's feeling right here.
- Hank Smith: 00:07:01 I'm not so sure I wanna be pregnant. Yeah.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:07:05 The Lord responds to her concern and says in verse 23, the Lord said unto her, 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 elder shall serve the younger. That verse is so key. That's an important clue to unpack why God would ever say, I hate Esau. Notice how he refers to Esau and how he refers to Jacob here, not just as an individual, but here as a nation. We'll come back to this in the end, but that's important for us to remember. Now, verse 24, and when Rebekah's days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb. 25. This is weird. And the first came out red all over like an hairy garment. They called his name Esau.
- 00:08:14 After that came his brother out and his hand took hold on Esau's heel and his name was called Jacob. And Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. Let's talk about that. Esau comes out and then right after here comes Jacob and he's still not even born yet, but he's reaching out and he's grabbing Esau and he's, it's almost like he's trying to tug him back in, like, get in back of the line. I wanna be the first born. It's conveying

this imagery that even from the womb, Jacob wants what? The birthright, covenant blessings. Being close to the Lord is everything to me. I'll do anything for it. Esau, get in back of the line. Good Bible scholars would say that this phrase to grab somebody by the heel when they study the ancient near Eastern texts from other cultures to grab the heel often expresses a desire for status or for acquiring property. Like almost trip you up. Isn't that what the covenant is? The Lord wants to make us royalty. He wants to give us high status in his kingdom. He wants to give us property and we're not just talking about one or two acres. He wants to have us inherit the earth, which will eventually become the celestial kingdom. That's what the text is expressing by having him reach out and grab Esau by the heel.

- Hank Smith: 00:09:52 We have to understand [genres](#). They're writing things for purpose. There's symbols behind everything.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:09:59 Yeah, we can't reinforce that or restate that enough as we go through this, especially in the Old Testament. Now let's talk about the firstborn blessing. I imagine our audiences heard this explained many times, so I'll be quick, but like we gotta look at it through the ancient near Eastern lens. Regardless of your race, it was typical that the male that was firstborn when the father died, then he would receive a double portion and he would become the ruler and he would inherit this extra amount of wealth so he could take care of the family or the clan. Okay, that's great. But the way it's portrayed in scripture is similar, but it's in a significant way different. The Lord takes the culture of the people and their traditions, but then he builds on it and he enhances it in scripture. When you see the birthright, it means something more. That's what we gotta look at. Now, stay tuned. We'll get to it, but notice here, verse 27. Now it says, and the boys grew, so they're growing up and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field, and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. The text is portraying two individuals with clashing personalities, complete different personality types. Esau is the oldest firstborn, Jacob youngest. Esau is red and hairy everywhere. And what's Jacob? He's plain. Red can symbolize also like he's got this temper. He's a hothead. He's a redhead.
- 00:11:53 The Bible describes him as plain, which in the Hebrew, a better translation would be he's civilized, he's well-mannered, he's even tempered.
- John Bytheway: 00:12:02 Oh, interesting.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:12:04 Hairy is Esau and Jacob is described later on as smooth. You remember when he has to go in and get the final blessing but Esau is a hairy man and so Rebekah says you're gonna have to put on some fur 'cause you're so smooth. You got these opposites. Then Esau is described as a cunning hunter and a man of the field. He loves outdoors. And then the opposite, Jacob is a man who dwells in tents. I love the indoors. I'm a homebody and it's these opposites, this contrast, these foils continue. Esau is whose favorite? Look at verse 28. And Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Oh, they're playing favorites. It's not just God who plays favorites. Now it's this amazing righteous gospel living couple Isaac and Rebekah.

John Bytheway: 00:13:11 And Rebekah.

Hank Smith: 00:13:14 This is funny. This is very human.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:13:18 And you're like, so Isaac, why is your son Esau the favorite? He's like, oh, he goes out and he hunts and he brings home the the meat and he puts it in the Dutch oven and is like, ah, I love it. And then the contrast is what does Jacob cook? Not the nice delicious savory venison in the Dutch oven. He makes soup. A mess of pottage. I got cup of noodles, I got some Kraft macaroni and cheese. These two over and over again are completely different. They're the opposites. I think that's an intentional rhetorical device that the, well, we traditionally believe that Moses crafted this. I think it's, it goes back to genre.

Hank Smith: 00:14:08 It's creating a contrast between these two. Yeah. Do you think Mike, I can hold on to the revelation that Rebekah received. The elder shall serve the younger and I wonder if she remembers that as time goes on that the Lord said Jacob, this younger, the one that I've, that the Lord has chosen and maybe she's moving forward with that and Isaac doesn't know that.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:14:37 I'm glad you pointed that out, Hank. Yeah. Okay. Well they grow up and then they have this interesting encounter verse 30 through 34. And again, if you're to run the fact checker on this, I don't know if this is strict straightforward history, but let's go ahead and read it as history and then we'll unpack the possible symbolism and the theological intent. Verse 29, Esau came from the field and he was faint. I guess he didn't catch anything. He didn't kill anything, so he is super hungry. Verse 30 and Esau said to Jacob, feed me. I pray thee. Now feed me, you read it in English, it sounds okay, but if you read it in the original Hebrew feed me uses a word that's vulgar and coarse. Esau is being portrayed as one with, how do I say it? Bestial appetites. He is

concerned about physical pleasures and he is very vulgar about it.

00:15:39 Feed me I pray thee with that same red pottage for I am faint, therefore was his name called Edom and Jacob said, sell me this day thy birthright. You see what he is doing. It just sounds like he's trying to swindle his brother out of the blessings of the covenant. You know this birthright blessing, you're like, what? The commandment is thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, not thou shalt swindle thy brother. You know, and you're like, what? But that seems what he was doing. Esau said verse 32, behold I am at the point to die. And that sounds like an exaggeration. You really think historically that Jacob would be like, I'm not gonna give you my cup of soup. I'm gonna sit here and watch you die.

Hank Smith: 00:16:26 Kinda reminds me of my kids, right? I'm starving. No you're not.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:16:31 Esau said, behold, I am at the point to die. What profit shall this birthright do to me? 33. And Jacob said, swear to me this day. You gotta make an oath. And Esau swore unto Jacob and Esau sold his birthright unto Jacob. Verse 34. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils and he did, notice the three things that Esau does. This is shocking. Esau did eat, drink, rose up and went his way. Sorry, four things. It's just like it's painting a picture. He's taking the food and he is just shoving in his mouth and it's dripping down and he's burping off to the side like blah, like he's this animal. He's totally spitting on the birthright blessing and he is walking like, what do I care? Totally flippant, casual. He is just this animal. Esau despised his birthright. Okay. Just absolutely shocking that he would do that.

Hank Smith: 00:17:41 Jacob is swindling him, but maybe Jacob also realizes that Esau doesn't care about it.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:17:47 Maybe this is why God hates Esau. 'cause he's a slob and he's spitting upon the birthright. No, but we know that God doesn't hate people even because let's be honest, you and I and our listeners sometimes we're Esau. Yeah. I mean we've all fallen short of the glory of God and there are times that we do and we say things we know we shouldn't and we let physical appetite rule the day. Does God hate us then? Of course not. We still gotta figure out why would God say he hates him? We read it through this historical lens. We touched on how the birthright really represents the covenant, the [Old Testament manual](#) for seminary teachers throughout the world that's passed through curriculum has this beautiful phrase that I think is so helpful to see the true intention, or I should say the primary intention, the

exegetical meaning of the text. It says quote, the birthright included all the blessings and responsibilities of the Abrahamic covenant. What I think the text wants us to see. It's not that Esau, sure he wants the birthright in historically he would want the money, he would want the power, but what he's spitting upon is the spiritual aspects.

00:19:14 So in the ancient near East, he would want that birthright from the the culture tradition, the power and the money. But as birthright is used in scriptures where it refers to the covenant blessings of they were having a covenant, that's what he's spitting on and that's what this text is primarily pointing out.

John Bytheway: 00:19:32 I'm hearing too that I want all the blessings of the birthright, but I don't want the responsibilities. Could I say it that way?

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:19:39 Yeah, yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:19:43 That sounds like a lot of work.

John Bytheway: 00:19:45 Yeah, that sounds like you're putting a lot on me here.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:19:47 I can't say no to a calling if the bishop calls me and I have to go to the temple regularly and maybe serve a full-time mission and 10% tithing, nah, I'm spitting on that. I'm not interested. I'm in, I'm into, going boating on Sunday and I wanna keep my money and I wanna have a good time.

Hank Smith: 00:20:06 Plus I'm hungry.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:20:08 And I'm hungry.

Hank Smith: 00:20:09 I'm hungry right now. Let's go.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:20:11 This is so important now in scriptures, like I was alluding to the birthright in scriptures. The Lord doesn't wanna just give the firstborn male a double portion, notice in Doctrine and Covenants section 76 verse 54 and 55, it says the church of the Firstborn. Firstborn, are they into whose hands the father has given double portion? No. All things. And you see that in Genesis chapter 25 verse five. It states that Abraham gave Isaac a double portion? Nope. He gave Isaac, it says everything he had. God doesn't want to give us a double portion. He wants to give us everything he has. John and Hank it's not that God just wants to give us all the things that he has. It's even bigger than that and you're like, wait, how can he give us more than all that he has? I love how Brother Brad Wilcox explained in General

Conference. He said, quote, it would be easy for heavenly Father to simply give you all that he has. His desire is to help you become all that he is. That's what this birthright is about, at least as found in scripture.

- Hank Smith: 00:21:37 Yeah, Esau has no interest in that.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:21:40 And that's manifested in chapter 26 where Esau marries two Hittite women. He marries outside the covenant.
- Hank Smith: 00:21:49 Which was so crucial to Abraham when we started that we marry in the covenant, live in the promised land. Well keep telling us this story here, Mike. What happens to these two after this?
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:22:01 I also think if [Brad Wilcox](#) could go back in and get in a time machine and if he could have a one-on-one with Esau as he's trying to decide, oh, do I wanna be on this covenant path or not? Brad Wilcox, he just talks with so much energy. Imagine. He goes on to say in that same talk. I know he would've said this to Esau and he's saying it to all of us, he says, don't sell your birthright for a mess of pottage. Don't trade everything for nothing. Don't let the world change you when you were born to change the world. Esau, like a lot of our loved ones, our friends and family, sometimes us we're selling it. We're letting the world change us. We're tempted with that every day. This text is beautifully inviting us to know how to navigate to be in the world, but not of the world.
- Hank Smith: 00:23:00 Brad's gonna be our guest next week.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:23:02 I bet there are some of our listeners out there that are thinking about this like, wait a minute though. The birthright was for the oldest, the firstborn. I'm not the firstborn, I'm the youngest in my family or I'm the middle child. That feels kind of exclusive. Well, people sometimes miss this gem. Exodus chapter four, the Lord says, Israel is my firstborn son.
- John Bytheway: 00:23:38 Interesting.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:23:40 [President Russell M. Nelson](#) in 2024 said, quote, priesthood keys give the authority to extend all of the blessings promised to Abraham to every covenant keeping man and woman. At least as found in the scripture context, the firstborn birthright blessing can refer to everyone who's wanted to make covenant, male and female. Later on in October, 2022, [President Nelson](#) continued. He said, God wants to connect all people to the

covenant he made anciently with Abraham. Now I find this fascinating. I don't think it's a coincidence. Lehi's about to die. He said in 2 Nephi chapter one verse 28, he has Laman and Lemuel come and he says to them, check this out, and now my son Laman and also Lemuel. Behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi, you shall not perish and if you will hearken unto Nephi, I leave unto you a blessing. Here it is. Yea even my first blessing, I mean I don't think Lehi is dumb. He knows and he's seen Laman and Lemuel repeatedly murmur that they wanna kill Nephi. Why do they want him dead? It's the same reason Cain wanted to kill Abel. It wasn't so he could just have the sheep. This story is all throughout scripture. They want the younger righteous brother dead so they could have the gold, the silver and the precious things and the right to rule.

- Hank Smith: 00:25:24 It's pure jealousy as well. I just hate that you are this person.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:25:29 It almost seems like it's Lehi's dying wish in his plea to Laman and Lemuel like, hey, you don't need to get jealous here. Now Nephi does have the spiritual mantle here. You need to hearken to him, but if you'll be faithful to the Lord and your covenants, God can give you everything. You can enjoy the the blessings that really matter when it comes to the birthright. Laman, Lemuel, what do they do? They do the same thing that Esau does. They spit upon the covenant. They're like, no thanks. Lehi continues. This idea of firstborn birthright seems to be in the forefront of his mind right before he dies. Covenants matter. Look at 2 Nephi, chapter two verse one. He brings forth Jacob, notice how he addresses him. This is fascinating. He says, I speak unto you Jacob. Thou art my firstborn. Firstborn in the wilderness. Jacob is not gonna sell his birthright for a mess of pottage.
- 00:26:37 It seems like Lehi is underscoring you are a firstborn son. I know you're not the firstborn biologically in this family, but for all intents and purposes in God's eyes, you are firstborn and you are entitled to not just the double portion but to everything. Good job, son. I'm super proud of you. Identity matters, right? We're children of God, children of the covenant and disciples of Christ and I think that's what Lehi is reinforcing here. You are a covenant keeper Jacob, you are a firstborn. Laman, Lemuel you can be covenant keepers, you can be firstborns. There's one more in the Book of Mormon. Lehi then brings his grandkids, oh, I just became a grandpa eight months ago. This one's just tender to me. These are Laman's children. Notice what Lehi says to them in 2 Nephi 4:3. He says, behold my sons and my daughters who are the sons and the daughters of my firstborn, he still wants to call Laman a firstborn son. Your true identity,

whether you realize it or not you stinker is you are a firstborn. You are of the covenant now you need to wake and arise from the dust and come on, you can do this son and do it for the sake of your kids and my grandkids. That is Lehi's dying wish, which is the same wish for any righteous mom, dad, grandpa, or grandma. Isn't that what we want more than anything?

John Bytheway: 00:28:14

Yeah, it's all that matters.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:28:24

Well, it's time to solve the mystery then. Maybe our listeners already they're like, okay, I get it. Why does God repeatedly say I love Jacob but I hate Esau? Let's tie this up. Of course God loves everyone perfectly, but Esau is serving as a symbol for the godless and jealous individual who rejects the covenant. Esau is being used typologically as a type of those that are corrupt and are off the covenant path. Remember it said there are two nations. Genesis 25:23. These nations could be categorized generally speaking as this nation. They're outside the covenant and this other nation is in the covenant. Jacob/Israel, he symbolizes those who embrace God's covenant. All we're saying is what does God absolutely love, love, love, love? I love it when people keep covenants. He's gonna use that word hate. He's gonna use hyperbole to dramatically rhetorically get his point across. If there's anything that God of heaven hates, it's when people spit upon their covenants.

Hank Smith: 00:29:51

I've seen that God hates things that hurt the most people, right? When he uses that word abomination, it's usually this is what hurts people the most.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:30:03

Hmm, good point. Now this is so tough. Recently I had a former institute student send me a direct message at, I even wrote down the time 'cause it was on my phone and it showed 1:39 AM He was asking me a question. Basically he says, I'm falling in love with a non-member girl and he just wanted know is that okay for me to date her and like I can marry her, right? She's a good girl. I mean these are typical situations that we face all the time with our loved ones. I think as we go carefully through these Genesis chapters, we just see what the prophets are telling us all the time. Of course, there are absolutely wonderful people throughout the world of all different faiths and religions. The Lord is asking us, he's pleading with us, please keep your covenants with me first and foremost and then just trust me. I can take care of you and I know that's easy for me to sit here on a podcast and say that I know there's some tricky situations out there and I do not wanna pass judgment on any marriage. I know we're all doing the best we can. I do know that for our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, covenants matter. Notice all

throughout scripture how many firstborns don't sell their birthright for some macaroni and cheese.

- Hank Smith: 00:31:36 Honestly, it's hard to think of one of the oldest that it actually does it, besides Jesus I guess.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:31:44 That's where we're going Hank. The Bible, the Old Testament makes a deliberate attempt to show that over and over again, especially in Genesis, but there's other places too where the firstborn does not get it and I think it's the Lord's way of saying to us, we're covenant Israel, you're all Esau. We would say you've all been born in the covenant. Esau was born in the covenant. You all are stinkers. You all have been selling your birthright for a mess of pottage. We all do that. We all sometimes go through this despair, but then there's this one firstborn in scripture that never once went for the cup of soup. It's the Firstborn Jesus Christ. I think that's an intentional deliberate theological attempt of the Bible to point to the hope that we have in him.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:39 Mike, this has been fantastic. You've brought these people to life for me. I like how you read scripture. John likes to quote Joseph Fielding McConkie that we read scripture too fast and when you can go slow there are little beautiful things to be found. If you can speak the Hebrew it sounds like you can even see more.
- John Bytheway: 00:33:02 Wow. Yeah.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:03 Let's the three of us walk through these next chapters because I'm certain there are listeners out there wondering the same thing perhaps Rebekah was wondering is...
- John Bytheway: 00:33:13 Right?
- Hank Smith: 00:33:13 Can this ever be healed? What happens. Because what we have happen next, and we talk about this actually in our things to keep in mind, section with Dr. Ross Baron. Essentially Rebekah and Jacob worked together to take the blessing from Esau that Isaac had meant for Esau and there is a major falling out between them in which Jacob has to flee. His brother is going to kill him so he goes away.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:33:49 Which is a an exact parallel of what account? In the Book of Mormon.
- Hank Smith: 00:33:54 Yeah.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:33:56 Lehi dies and immediately Laman and Lemuel, now we're gonna kill you 'cause there's no way over my dead body that you're gonna be in charge of this. You do not get the birthright. It's the same story.

Hank Smith: 00:34:08 I feel bad for Rebekah when she says to Isaac, I am weary of my life. I wonder how many parents have felt that way? How many mothers? We will be talking numerous times on the show this year about Jacob and his change and his wrestling with the Lord and him receiving the name of Israel. After that he's going to meet his Rachel. He's going to marry not just Rachel but Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah have these many sons. In the middle of all this there's a reconciliation that needs to take place. Doesn't it begin in 31 where the Lord says it's time to go home?

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:34:58 Exactly. And I'm glad you landed on that. Look at verse three, chapter 31 verse three, here's the divine command. I mean life was good you guys. He's spending 20 years up here in the north country outside the land of Canaan, outside the covenant land. He's got the Bitcoin and the Teslas. He's happily married, he's got a beautiful family. They're going to Costa Vida every week. They go once a year to Disneyland. Life is great. And the scriptures say that he has a lot of wealth. He's enjoying the blessings. Then his world falls apart here in Genesis 30, verse three, the Lord said unto Jacob, quote, return unto the land, and we gotta underscore the definite article. I mean not that you've been a bad boy, you've been righteous, you've been doing good, but you've gotta get back to the covenant land, which would be all fine and dandy, but who's there waiting for him?

Hank Smith: 00:36:02 Yeah, but my brother's there. He didn't exactly have good feelings for me the last time we saw each other.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:36:09 Remember he's got this anger and I know it's been 20 years and I guess Jacob from a historical perspective doesn't even know if his brother Esau is even alive, but can you imagine what the Lord's asking? It would be hard enough if Jacob had to go back just he himself and maybe himself die, but he's being asked to go with his family, his wives, and his children. Now this is a permanent move. The Lord's asking him to put his neck on the line. You need to be willing to die if needs be, but you've gotta be in the covenant.

Hank Smith: 00:36:45 And he does it. Verse 17 says, then Jacob rose up set his sons and his wives upon camels. Here we go.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:36:53 Actually before we do that, Jacob, he's not a dummy so he decides to write Esau a note and this note is fascinating. If you're Esau and you're gonna get this note or this letter from your brother, how would you react? This is what the note says and it's in Genesis chapter 32 verses four and five. This is what he said. Dear Esau, quote, thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have lived with Laban, his father-in-law, and stayed in Harran until now and I have oxen and asses, flocks and men's servants and women's servants and I have sent to tell my Lord that I might find grace in thy sight. Love or hug hug kiss kiss or sincerely Jacob. He writes it and then he gets a trusted servant and he says, hey, I don't know if he's still alive. Will you go see if you can find him? Go 500 miles and if you find him, deliver this letter and then come back and tell me what happens. We know that Esau does get the letter and he reads it, but we don't know what his reaction is. What do you think his reaction would be? Any thoughts John or Hank?

Hank Smith: 00:38:19 We don't know what's happened to Esau. Don't we know he lived with his mother and his mother died.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:38:23 And yeah, Jacob wouldn't have been there for the funeral.

Hank Smith: 00:38:27 Has he turned? Has he calmed? Or is he holding onto that anger, in a way of I can take out 20 years of anger on you right now.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:38:38 There's one of two ways that he could interpret this because notice Jacob intentionally is mentioning all this abundance of animals. Is this like nana, nana, boo boo. This is what you wanted. You wanted this double per portion. You wanted the wealth 'cause that's what these animals symbolize. That's the bitcoin and he's like, look at what I got. You could look at it that way. There's other words and phrases that indicate that is not what he's trying. He's not trying to rub it in his face. He starts a letter, Dear Esau, thy servant Jacob. He's saying, I am your servant. At the end he says, I have sent to tell who? My lord, that word lord is lowercase L, but sometimes it's capital L. It's the same word. He's addressing him as not only am I your servant, but you're my master. Notice the last phrase that I may find grace in thy sight.

00:39:53 If you look at every time that appears in the Hebrew Bible, find grace in thy sight. That is a formal expression that is used when someone is making a request of a superior who has higher authority. At first blush, we read that and we might okay it's a nice letter, but this in the original Hebrew is saturated with respectful language. Esau, you're my superior. He's being very

deferential to Esau and that's clear and even scholars will say, it's almost like he's trying to tell Esau, I know you've got a beef with me. You're mad at me because of the drama regarding the birthright, the firstborn blessing. I'm willing to give you all these things to compensate you. I just want us to bury the hatchet. Let's smoke the peace pipe. That's what this letter's all about. The servant goes, he comes back and Jacob was like, did you find Esau?

00:40:55 Yes I did. Did you give him the letter? I did. Did he read it? He did. What did he say? Oh yeah, he responded. He has a message for you. It's in verse six. He says he's coming to meet you and you can just see Jacob, oh, he does wanna smoke the peace pipe. He says, no, no, you interrupted me. I didn't finish my sentence. He's coming to meet you with 400 men. He's bringing his boys Jacob, what does he do immediately? Verse 12, he falls on his knees and he, God deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother. For thou said Lord, I will surely make thy seed as the sand of the sea, but if you don't intervene, my seed is gonna be buried in the sands of the sea. You've gotta intervene we're toast here.

00:41:53 This prayer is absolutely one of desperation. We've all had those moments. It was kinda like when I woke up at 4:00 AM this morning so nervous and excited about this podcast. My prayer is a little bit more earnest this morning. I'm like, please help me not to make a fool of myself. Don't let me embarrass my wife and family, and you know, and there's been other more life and death situations where sometimes our prayers are more earnest where we're that's what's going on here and when we reach that level, I love what President Russell M. Nelson taught us. He says, quote, when you reach up for the Lord's power in your life with that same intensity that a drowning person has when grasping and gasping for air, power from Jesus Christ will be yours and we're gonna see that happen. That's what's going on here and the Lord's gonna give him power.

00:42:44 So what happens next? Jacob I think he got inspiration. Genesis chapter 32 verses 14 and 15. He decides to send Esau what's called a present. That's in verse 13 actually. He says, I'm gonna send a present to Esau. I sent him a note, but now I'm gonna send him a present and he's gonna send this with his servants. What's the present? Well, 200 she goats, 20 he goats 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 camels with their colts, 40 kine, 10 bulls, 20 she asses, and 10 male donkeys. It's like I'm trying to compensate. I'm not just giving you lip service. When I wrote you that letter, I'm really willing to give it. It is key to note that in scripture, herds, cattle and flocks don't just indicate wealth but also

covenant blessings. In Deuteronomy the Lord repeatedly declares that if his people Israel keep the covenant, then he will multiply their cattle, herds and their flocks.

00:43:46 For example, we see that in Deuteronomy 7:11 to 13. So does Jacob merely want to appease Esau with the riches of this gift of animals or is Jacob being a missionary and trying to share the blessings of the covenant? So they travel I don't know how many miles they traveled 'cause Esau is also coming. Maybe they met halfway, but the servants take all these herds and they're gonna give these to Esau. Now here's what's key. Tell me what you think brothers. The Hebrew word for present is mincha and mincha repeatedly appears in context when somebody approaches the Lord to give him an offering, an animal sacrifice, typically in the tabernacle of Moses or in the temple of Solomon, you see it in Leviticus chapter six, it says, the sons of Aaron shall offer the offering the mincha before the Lord. You see it with Cain and Abel in Genesis four. The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering his mincha, right? It's interesting that this is being couched as he's not just treating Esau as, oh, you're my superior. He's treating Esau as if he's God. That's shocking. It's one thing to show some respect, but this is next level. You give the Lord the very best. This is unbelievable gift that he's giving him.

John Bytheway: 00:45:24 Just keeps going in these verses and I'm thinking in that day and age, that's a lot of wealth.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:45:29 Why is he doing this? He tells you in verse 20, Jacob said, by giving this present, I will appease Esau with the present, the mincha that goeth before me. And afterward he says, I will see his face. That phrase I will see his face is a term generally used for entering in the presence of royalty. And then he says, and then perhaps Esau will accept of me. The present gets delivered. It's now the eve before he is gonna see Esau and his 400 men and he still doesn't know if he's like, are we gonna get slaughtered here. We are at the mercy of our enemy here, Esau. There's a wrestle. Initially it sounds like he's wrestling with an angel, but as the narrative unfolds you realize that really this is a very sacred, templelike endowment, like passing through the veil, going into the Celestial room.

00:46:34 This is an embrace, a wrestling with the Lord. [President Nelson](#) has talked about that. He said, quote, these sacred temple rights are ancient. To me that antiquity is thrilling and another evidence of their authenticity. Here in Genesis 32:24 through 31, that is the single best text that I've ever come across to understand what is going on in the temple. When I go through

the veil and go into the Celestial room, there are clear and powerful parallels. Hank and John, if you guys are cool with it, I wanna try an experiment. I wanna divide up this next section in parts. I'm gonna read the narrator parts. John, you read every part where it's the Lord speaking, Hank, you can read where Jacob is speaking. Verse 24, Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. When Jacob saw that he prevailed not against the man, Jacob touched the hollow of his thigh and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with the man. Verse 26, and the Lord said,

John Bytheway:	00:47:54	Let me go for the day breaketh.
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:47:56	And Jacob said,
Hank Smith:	00:47:59	I will not let thee go except thou bless me.
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:48:03	And the Lord said unto Jacob,
John Bytheway:	00:48:08	what is thy name?
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:48:10	And Jacob said,
Hank Smith:	00:48:13	Jacob
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:48:13	And the Lord said,
John Bytheway:	00:48:17	thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed.
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:48:27	And Jacob asked the Lord and said,
Hank Smith:	00:48:31	tell me, I pray thee thy name.
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:48:33	And the Lord said,
John Bytheway:	00:48:35	Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?
Bro. Mike Harris:	00:48:40	And the Lord blessed Jacob there and Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved. And as Jacob passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him and he halted upon his thigh. Thoughts as we went through that and read that?
Hank Smith:	00:49:06	There's a good little temple prep. You learn to speak temple language in certain sections of the scriptures and that's a little

temple language for you where you start to see, it's very similar to the brother of Jared where the brother of Jared approaches the Lord, sees his hand, has a conversation and then is invited into his presence. This sounds very similar.

- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:49:29 In verse 25. It's interesting that it says that [Jacob](#) touched the hollow of the Lord's thigh. There's all kinds of commentary on that. Touched, the Hebrew word for touch can also convey to touch violently or to strike or I would say thrust. Remember when the Savior was resurrected and he appears to Thomas and Thomas says, I'm not gonna believe, and the Lord invites him to thrust his finger into his side. It's that same imagery and you see that also with the Nephites in 3 Nephi chapter 11, when they're brought into the presence of Jesus Christ, he invites them to thrust. It's that same language. I think we're getting that right here, into his side. We're having this holy embrace, then you're like, but he doesn't say into my side here, he says into the hollow of his thigh. Hollow comes from the Hebrew word that can sometimes also refer to the palm of your hand.
- 00:50:45 Thigh can sometimes refer, yes, it can refer to the loin area, but it can sometimes also refer to a side. I don't wanna be overly dogmatic saying that's the way we need to interpret it, but I think it's worth consideration. Another nice thing to point out is the deliberate word play going on here. The Hebrew word for wrestle is abaq, and the Hebrew word for embrace is chabaq. What's gonna happen in the next chapter? The very next day, there's gonna be a holy embrace. That's key. It's not a wrestle that's going on, it's this embrace.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:33 There's this wrestle with the Lord before this miraculous reconciliation and don't you see that in our lives, Mike? If this family's gonna be healed, it's gonna involve the Lord. I have got to go to the Lord and say, I don't know how to heal this family, so help me. And they have this really intense experience. Now [Jacob](#) is ready to go meet Esau, not knowing if it's gonna work.
- Bro. Mike Harris: 00:52:10 Chapter 33. Here's the moment of moments. It gets intense. If this was a movie, the crescendo, the music is building and building, you know those scenes where the armies are charging after you and there's gonna be, it's really intense, it's kinda like that. Verse one, and Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, there's that threefold sight imagery. Lift up eyes, looked, behold. This is the moment. It is unfolding before his eyes. Will there be reconciliation? Then you gotta ask yourself, okay, so we know that lift up your eyes is an idiom and it can either mean, just to look closely, make a close inspection or it can mean is this gonna be a visionary revelatory moment? I

would suggest yes, historically, Jacob's lifting up his eyes and he is looking at the horizon. Oh, I see the dust kicking up.

00:53:08 I see a bunch of people. Is that Esau and his four-? He's cast, he's lifting his eyes. He want, he's making a close inspection. He looked and behold and Esau came with his 400 men and he divided the children, Leah and Rachel and the two handmaids verse three, and Jacob himself passed over before them. That them's referring to his wives and his kids and he bowed himself to the ground seven times. I've never seen this movie made. He bows and I imagine he takes another step or two. Then he bows a second time, takes a step or two forward, bows again. Seven times indicating this is complete submission and humility. He is treating Esau as royalty here.

00:53:59 Then it says in the end of verse three, until he came near to his brother, that phrase he came near, those three words he came near is a Hebrew phrase used when priests draw near to the altar to minister before God. You know you had Moses' tabernacle and you had the tent and outside was the altar of sacrifice. That Hebrew phrase, he came near, you don't hear it in the English, but if you look at the Hebrew and every time that appears, often it refers to when the Levites or the priests would come and offer animals at that altar. Again, he's not just treating Esau as a king, but he's even treating with respect as if he was approaching God himself. Verse four, and Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him and they wept. What's crazy about this, who initiates all the actions?

John Bytheway: 00:55:05 Sounds like Esau.

Bro. Mike Harris: 00:55:08 Esau is the one running. It's Esau that embraces Jacob. Esau fell on his neck, Esau kissed him, and then they weep together. That was not expected. Mr. redheaded hothead. Then notice verse five, and who lifts up his eyes? Esau lifts up his eyes and you can say he's just looking around. Hey, who are all these women and children and all these flocks and donkeys and cattle? He's trying, okay, you can read that historically, but I would also suggest he's gonna have the Spirit work on him. He's gonna have a vision. Whoa, I'm seeing the blessings of the covenant here. Verse six. The handmaids come and they bow before Esau and seven, Leah and all her kids come and bow. And then Esau says in verse eight, what is the meaning behind all of these flocks? Then Jacob says, these flocks are to find grace in the sight of my lord.

00:56:15 In other words, they're all for you. Verse nine. And Esau said, this is key. I hope our listeners really listen to this. I have enough. Verse 10, and Jacob said, nay, I pray thee, which means, please, please, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand. For therefore, I have seen thy face as though I have seen the face of God and thou wast pleased with me. Verse 11, take I pray thee Esau, please take my blessing. He's not just interested in you. Take my animals so we can bury the hatchet and we can be on good terms. Let me compensate you 'cause you feel like I swindled you. He's imploring him to accept the gospel covenant. Take my blessing that is brought to thee, because God hath dealt graciously with me and because I have enough. That echoes the same phrase that we heard in verse nine when Esau says, no, no, I'm good.

00:57:17 I have enough, and then Jacob says, no, I have enough. But now it's a different Hebrew word. The KJV uses enough in both responses, but when Jacob says it, he says, I have the Hebrew word is kol. I have everything. I have all things. Which hearkens back to Genesis chapter 24 verse one where the Lord said that he had blessed Abraham in all things. We call that in biblical studies that's an inclusio. The whole main purpose of it is to know that God can bless us through the covenant in all ways. It ends with this amazing cliffhanger and Jacob urged Esau and Esau took it and then it just ends. Okay, so he took the animals, but on a symbolic level, did Esau accept the covenant? It just leaves you hanging like you gotta decide for yourself. That's an invitation for us as the readers to realize, 'cause we all have Esau's, a lot of them will come back and they will accept it.

00:58:31 The text seems to suggest that maybe he did because he lifted up his eyes, he maybe had that revelatory moment where the Spirit's working on him. It's Esau that initiates the hug, the embrace, the kiss, the falling on the neck. It's Esau that's very forgiving. The text is clearly trying to say, there's so many that we cry ourselves to sleep and we worry about them. Are you gonna make it? And the text is like, that's the Lord imploring us. You don't give up on them. Those Esaus can become like heavenly Father, not just receive the covenant, but they are gonna be exalted.

Hank Smith: 00:59:13 I have a couple of stories I brought today that I want to share because the Come, Follow Me manual has this short little section that says the Savior can heal my family. As Jacob returned to Canaan, he was greatly afraid and distressed about how his brother Esau would receive him. It asks us to read these sections that you've read with us and said maybe this story could inspire you to reach out to someone. So I wanted to give

some examples of these and maybe you both could share. These are short little stories of reconciliation. This first one is written by [President Russell M. Nelson](#). He said 58 years ago I was asked to operate on a little girl gravely ill from congenital heart disease. Her older brother had previously died of a similar condition. Her parents pleaded for help. I was not optimistic about the outcome, but vowed to do all in my power to save her. Despite my best efforts the child died.

01:00:15 Later the same parents brought another daughter to me, just 16 months old, also born with a malformed heart. Again at their request, I performed an operation. This child also died. He said this third heartbreaking loss in one family literally undid me. I went home grief stricken. I threw myself on our living room floor and cried all night. Dantzel, his wife, stayed by my side listening as I repeatedly declared I would never perform another heart operation. Dantzel looked at me lovingly and said, are you finished crying? Get dressed. Go back to the lab. Go to work. You need to learn more. If you quit now, others will have to painfully learn what you already know. Well then in April of 2016, he shared this on social media. Congenital heart disease afflicted three children born to Ruth and Jimmy Hatfield. Their first son, Jimmy Junior, died without a definitive diagnosis.

01:01:23 I entered the picture when the parents sought help for their two daughters, Laural Ann and younger sister Gay Lynn. I was heartbroken when both girls died following their operations. Understandably, Ruth and Jimmy were spiritually shattered. Over time, I learned that they harbored lingering resentment toward me and the church. For almost six decades I have been haunted by this situation and have grieved for the Hatfields. I tried several times to establish contact with them without success. Then one night, last May, I was awakened by those two little girls from the other side of the veil. Though I did not see or hear them with my physical senses, I felt their presence spiritually. I heard their pleadings. Their message was brief and clear.

01:02:16 Emboldened by the pleadings of Laural Ann and Gay Lynn, I tried to connect with their father, their mother had passed away, who I learned was living with his son, Shawn. This time they were willing to meet with me. In June, President Nelson says, I literally knelt in front of Jimmy, now 88 years old and had a heart to heart talk with him. I spoke of his daughter's pleadings and told him I would be honored to perform temple ordinances for his family. He said, the Spirit of the Lord was palpable throughout the meeting and when Jimmy and Shawn each accepted my offer, I was overjoyed. Not long ago in the

Payson Utah temple, I had the profound privilege of sealing Ruth to Jimmy and their four children to them. Wendy and I wept as we participated in that sublime experience. Reconciliation.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:03:12 The thought that came to my mind is when, wow, you ask me to picture President Nelson literally kneeling before him. That reminds me of what that's what Jacob, he bowed himself seven times. So I just barely started podcasting with my daughter, Kyla Spackman. On YouTube it's @KylaSpackman. We were talking about this and she's like, dad, you know in this story we're the Esau's. It's as if God is the one who bows himself down towards us. It's God. Even though we can be slobs and we can sell our birthright for a mess of pottage, God continues to treat us as royalty. He knows our true destiny.

Hank Smith: 01:03:58 This is our friend [S. Michael Wilcox](#), who's joining us on the podcast again this year later on. This story comes from him. He has one memory of his father prior to his parents' divorce. He's very young and he is sitting on top of his father's shoulders at an amusement park. His father, who had been instrumental in his mother's return to the church, fell away from the church himself as the rest of his life fell apart. After the divorce, Michael's father occasionally came to town to take Michael and his siblings to the amusement park, but there were no letters, no gifts between visits. In the absence of his father, Michael's mother, Norma Wilcox threw everything she had into raising Michael and his older sisters. We were the most important thing in her life, and so we saved her and she saved us, Michael said. His mother, who was a stalwart Latter-day Saint for the remainder of her life, taught Michael that though his father wasn't around, there was someone else.

01:05:01 He could always rely on his Father in heaven, and so Michael begins to talk to his Father in heaven regularly. He talks about how he said, I have this feeling now that I've been talking to God my whole life. Perhaps it was this communication with Heavenly Father that led to a stirring in Michael's heart as a freshman in college, a stirring that led him to do something he did not anticipate in college. He says, I was moved by God to engage my father. Which terrified him because he didn't think he mattered. He did matter. His being gone mattered. His father was scared to death when he received Michael's call, but Michael was determined to make his father a part of his family. From their reconnection to the end of his life, Michael's father was invited to holiday gatherings. He was loved unconditionally, and as Michael had children, his father became a grandfather.

01:06:06 Mike goes on to say, now he wasn't the greatest of grandpas because he didn't know how, but he could be involved. Michael adds, my father was a weak man, but he was not a bad man. His father returned to the church and served a mission on Temple Square and when he died, Michael wept in the great wisdom of God's goodness. My father was instrumental in bringing my mother back into the church and then his life fell apart and he left. So my father brought my mother into the church. My mother gave me my faith and I gave it back to my father.

John Bytheway: 01:06:45 Hmm. Beautiful.

Hank Smith: 01:06:48 I wanted to show you both something, and maybe I'm just being a little overly emotional here, but here is this beautiful reconciliation between Esau and Jacob and do you notice who witnesses it? This is Genesis 32, verse seven. Leah also with her children came near and bowed themselves and after came Joseph near and Rachel and they bowed themselves. I have to wonder if Joseph of Egypt learned how to forgive and reconcile from this moment.

John Bytheway: 01:07:28 Great insight.

Hank Smith: 01:07:30 Don't you wonder if that stuck with him for the rest of his life? He saw brothers meet and reconcile and he himself is gonna be in that same position later in life.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:07:44 So inspiring. I'd never seen that Hank.

John Bytheway: 01:07:48 What I love about so many current events in the Old Testament is they foreshadow coming events. This is that long view of God that we've always talked about. He's a healer, he's a restorer. He's a deliverer. Here we see this reconciliation and I think it foreshadows a huge reconciliation. Perhaps we can all hope for that and work for it in the next life. I love that the story's in here and that there's a whole lot of middle to get through, which is really tough and characterized by wrestling, but there's a reconciliation coming and we can hope for that. God is really good at it. He's mighty to save. He's eager to forgive and in relentless pursuit. I love it.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:08:34 Yeah, Mike, you've made me wonder what is happening to Esau this whole time? We don't know. We don't know. But the Lord was working with him, I think, the same way he was working with Jacob.

01:08:50 And I think the way he's working with all of us individually, you and I, and all our families, as messy as things might be.

Hank Smith: 01:08:59 For such a messy family, it sure is a beautiful story. Maybe that's true for all of us.

John Bytheway: 01:09:09 Yeah, maybe bigger messes get bigger reconciliations. So.

Hank Smith: 01:09:15 Beautiful. Mike, thanks for spending your day with us.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:09:19 Thank you so much. What a thrill.

Hank Smith: 01:09:20 Yeah. This was so much fun. And I know when I'm feeling the Holy Ghost, 'cause I don't want it to end. I wanna go back and let's cover more words, more verses. I'm just really touched by the way you read scripture. You've taught me to go slower as I read, and it's been really wonderful, Mike. Yeah.

Bro. Mike Harris: 01:09:39 Thank you.

Hank Smith: 01:09:40 With that, we want to thank Brother Mike Harris for being with us today. We want to thank our executive producer Shannon Sorensen, our sponsors David and Verla Sorensen. And every episode we remember our founder Steve Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We have more of this messy family coming up on followHIM. As a thank you to our wonderful listeners, we'd love to gift you the digital version of our book, Finding Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It offers short, meaningful insights drawn from our past Old Testament episodes. Visit [followhim.co](http://followhim.co). That's [followhim.co](http://followhim.co) to download your free copy today, and you'll also find the link to purchase the print edition. Thank you for being part of our followHIM family. Of course, none of this could happen without our incredible production crew. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, Ariel Cuadra, Heather Barlow, Amelia Kabwika, Sydney Smith and Annabelle Sorensen.

## followHIM Favorites



- Hank Smith: 00:03 Welcome to followHIM Favorites. This is where John and I share a single story with each weeks Come, Follow Me lesson. John we're in chapters 25 through 33 of Genesis. You have a story. Is it about Jacob and Esau?
- John Bytheway: 00:16 It is. We've often heard he sold his birthright for a mess of potage. I didn't know what that meant. I thought, is that like a pot of message? Uh, I guess so. It's a bowl of beans. The whole idea was that one of these things is not like the other. It reminded me of a Music & the Spoken Word. I love the Tabernacle Choir Hank, the little messages they've given there. And I remember this one. This was amazing to me. A few years ago, executives at a large theme park hired consultants to help them understand how to capture the attention of small children. The consultants spent hours in a park observing children to see what most interested them. What they learned surprised them. The children seemed to be most captivated, not by the exciting rides, not by the costumed characters, not by the colorful displays, but instead by their parents' cell phones.
- 01:17 Especially when the parents were using them. And it made me laugh 'cause I thought of those Fisher-Price toys we make. Well, we'll make it in full color. It'll look like a cell phone, but we'll make it in full color. Maybe that'll help, right? Nope. I want the black one.
- Hank Smith: 01:32 Nothing.
- John Bytheway: 01:34 As one of the consultants reported, those kids clearly understood what held their parents' attention and they wanted it too. Even small children got the message that cell phones were enticing action centers of their world, more interesting apparently than an amusement park. Worst of all, when parents were using their cell phones, they were not paying complete attention to their children. This story might prompt us to pause and consider what captures our attention. I thought of the mess of potage there, the message it sends. If I'm talking to you,

Hank, but I'm also, wait, looking up my phone. Or if I put it on the table and I've had that weakness, I'm trying to be better.

Hank Smith: 02:22

Oh, me too. Worse than you, John.

John Bytheway: 02:25

No, I think you even did a talk about it. Wake up from your phone. It's a good message because it sends a message. A mess of potage, right? If I'm more interested in my phone, I gotta put that away. When I'm with people that I care about, put it away.

Hank Smith: 02:42

I've often told youth and un-youth too, that there's gonna come a day where you would give anything for 10 more minutes with that person and you've got your 10 minutes right in front of you. Why are you on your phone? There's gonna come a day where, oh, you would just give anything to talk to that person again. It's a good lesson, John. It's a good lesson. Every time I pick up my phone and my son says to me, hey dad, and if I don't put that phone away, I'm kind of trading my time with him for something kind of worthless. A mess of potage.

John Bytheway: 03:12

Yeah. Phone message or a message?

Hank Smith: 03:15

A phone message. I love it. Come join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcast. We're with Brother Mike Harris this week. He walks through these chapters in a wonderful way. He's excited. He shows us some lessons that I'd never seen before. You'll love him and then come back here next week. We'll do another followHIM Favorites.