

THE ARAB PERSONALITY

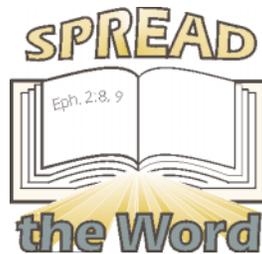
A Study on the Personalities of the Mid-East Crisis

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Divine Viewpoint

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THE ARAB PERSONALITY

A New Testament Commentary ...

Romans 9:13, "As it is written. Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Hebrews 11:20, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." Hebrews 12:16-17, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

Fornicator is the word PORNOS, which means profane. BEBELOS is from BELOS, which means to cross a doorway, or a threshold, to walk over.

Pottage vs. Birthright

Genesis 25:34, "Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils: and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright." We have many lessons but sometimes the points are strange and difficult to understand and we have a very different set of ideas today. So we will deal with the narrative in the time in which it was written.

Notice, first the Birthright. There was no idea of anything sacred or spiritual about it. All it meant was simply material advantages, the head of the clan. All the higher thoughts are gone from Isaac. And he thought he could bestow it for venison, from Esau, and from the scheming Rebekah and the crafty Jacob.

Genesis 25:28, "And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob." Genesis 27:3, "Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison;" Genesis 27:7, "Bring me venison, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death."

Genesis 27:35, "And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank." Genesis 27:31-33, "And he also had

made savory meat and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father. Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed."

The Bargain

It is not clear whether the transaction was seriously meant, or whether it only shows Jacob's wish to possess the birthright and Esau's indifference to it. At any rate, the barter was not supposed to complete Jacob's title, as is shown by a subsequent piece of trickery.

Genesis 27:15-19, "And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savory meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said My father: and he said, Here am I: who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn: I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

Isaac's blessing was conceived to confer it. That blessing, if once given, could not be revoked even if procured by fraud and given in error. The belief would fulfill itself, as far as the chieftainship was concerned. It is significant of the purely secular tone of all the parties concerned, that only temporal blessings are included in Isaac's words. There is a Scriptural judgment upon all parties that are concerned. Great mistakes are made by forgetting that the Bible is a passionless narrator of its heroes' acts, and seldom pauses to censure or praise. So people have thought the

Scripture gave its vote for Jacob as against Esau.

What is the character of the two men? Esau is frank, impulsive, generous, chivalrous, careless, and sensuous. Jacob is meditative, reflective, pastoral, timid, crafty, selfish.

Each has the defects of his qualities. But the subsequent history of Jacob shows what Heaven thought of him. The dirty transaction marred his life, sent him a terrified exile from Isaac's tent, and shook his soul long years after with guilty apprehensions when he had to meet Esau. In his subsequent career he had to beat his crafty selfishness out of him and to lift him to higher level.

Here Are Some Broad General Lessons:

The choice, Birthright vs. Pottage.

1. The principle of the Present vs. the Future.

Suppose it was true that to both brothers the birthright seemed to secure merely material advantage, yet even so the better part would have been to sacrifice material present for material future. Even on the plain of worldly things, to live for tomorrow ennobles a man and he is the higher style of man who spurns delights and lives a laborious day, for some issue to be realized in the far future.

The very principle extended leads to the conviction that the highest wisdom is his who lives for the furthest, which is also the most certain, future.

2. The principle of the Seen vs. the Unseen.

However material advantages of the birthright were supposed to be, they **then** appealed to imagination, and not sense. There was pottage in the pan, **I can see and smell it**. The birthright, can I eat it? Let me get the solid realities, and let who will have the imaginary.

So the unseen and the good things, such as intellectual culture, fair reputation, and the like, are better than the gross satisfactions that can be handled, or tasted or seen. And, on the very same principle, high above the seeker after these, as high as he

is above the drunkard, is the Christian, whose life is shaped by the loftiest Unseen, even Him who is invisible.

3. The grim absurdity of the choice.

The story seems to have a certain overtone of sarcasm, and a keen perception of the immense stupidity of the man. Pottage and a full belly today. That was all he got for such a sacrifice. **This their way is their folly.**

4. How well the bargain worked at first, and what came of it at last.

No doubt Esau had his meal, and no doubt when a man sells his soul to the devil, the medieval form of the story, he generally gets the price for which he bargained, more or less, and oftentimes with a deal of vinegar in the pottage, which makes it less palatable.

What comes of it at last? Put side by side the picture of Esau's animal contentment at the moment when he had eaten up his mess and of his despair when he wailed, "*Hast thou not one blessing?*"

Genesis 27:38, "*And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.*"

He finds out his mistake, a sense of preciousness of the deepest thing wakes in him. And it is too late. There are irrevocable consequences of every false choice. Youth is gone, you cannot alter that. Opportunities are gone, you cannot alter that. Strength is gone, you cannot alter that. Habits formed, associations, reputation, position, character, are all determined.

But there is a blessed contrast between Esau's experience and what may be ours. The desire to have the birthright is sure to bring it to us. No matter how late the desire is of springing, nor how long and insultingly we have suppressed it, we never go to our Father in vain, with the cry, "*Bless me, even me, also.*"

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

A BAD BARGAIN

The Arab Personality

Genesis 25:27-34, *“And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage: for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils: and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.”*

Isaac's small household represented a great variety of types of character. He himself lacked energy, and seems in later life to have been very much of a tool in the hands of others. Rebekah had the stronger nature, was persistent, energetic, and managed her husband to her heart's content. The twin brothers were strongly opposed in character. And naturally enough, each parent loved best the child that was most unlike him or her. Isaac loved Esau but Rebekah loved Jacob. And God loved Jacob and hated Esau. Isaac, rejoicing in the very wildness of the adventurous, dashing Esau, and Rebekah finding an outlet for her womanly tenderness in an undue partiality for the quiet lad that was always at hand to help her and be petted by her, momma's boy.

One's sympathy goes to out to Esau. He was a man of the field, by which he meant, not cultivated ground, but open country, which we might call the prairie. He was a backwoodsman. He liked the wild hunters life better than sticking at home looking after the sheep. His descendants prefer cattle ranching and gold prospecting to keeping sheep or sitting with their lungs squeezed against a desk.

Genesis 25:27, *“And the boys grew: and Esau*

was a cunning hunter, a man of the field and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.”

Jacob was a plain man, TAWM, which means gentle, dear, moral, pious. He had the attractive characteristics of that kind of men, as well as their faults. He was frank, impulsive, generous, capable of persevering work or of looking ahead, passionate. Jacob had neither the high spirits nor the animal courage of his brother. He was a plain man, steady going, respectable, in modern phraseology. He went quietly about his ordinary work, in contrast with the daring brother's escapades and unsettledness.

The two types are intensified by civilization, and the antagonism between them is increased. City life tends to produce Jacobs and its Esaus escape from it as soon as they can. But Jacob had the vices as well as the virtues of his qualities. He was orderly and domestic but he was tricky and keenly alive always to his own interests.

Genesis 27:6-13, *“And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats: and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver: and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.”*

He was persevering and almost dogged in his tenacity of purpose, but he was not above taking mean advantage and getting at his ends by miry roads. His end, he thought, jus-

tified his means, but the end never justifies the means.

He had little love for his brother, in whom he saw an obstacle to his ambition. He had the virtues and vices of the commercial spirit. But we judge the two men wrongly if we let ourselves be fascinated, as Isaac was, by Esau and forget that the superficial attractions of his character cover a core worthy of disapprobation.

They are crude judges of character who prefer the type of man who spurs the restraints of patient industry and order and popular authors, who make their heroes out of such, err in taste no less than in morals.

There is a very unwholesome kind of literature, which is devoted to glorifying the Esaus as fine fellows, with spirit, generosity, and noble carelessness, whereas at bottom they are governed by animal impulses, and incapable of estimating any good which does not appeal to sense, and that at once.

The great lesson of the story lies on the surface. It is the folly and the sin of buying present gratification of appetite or sense at the price of giving up far greater good. The details are picturesquely told.

Esau's eagerness, stimulated by the smell of the mess of lentils, is strikingly expressed in the Hebrew. Genesis 25:30, "*And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage: for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.*" "*Let me devour I pray thee, of that red, that red there.*"

It is no sin to be hungry, but to let appetite speak so clamorously indicates feeble self-control. Jacob's coolness is an unpleasant foil to Esau's impatience, and his cautious bargaining, before he will sell what a brother would have given, shows a mean soul, without generous love to his own flesh and blood.

Genesis 25:31-34, "*And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread*

and pottage of lentils: and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

Esau lets one ravenous desire hide everything else from him. He wants the pottage which smokes there, and that one poor dish is for the moment more to him than birthright and any future good. Jacob knows the changeableness of Esau's character, and is well aware that a hungry man will promise anything, and when fed, will break his promise as easily as he made it. So he makes Esau swear, and Esau will do that, or anything asked. He gets his meal.

The story graphically describes the greedy relish with which he ate, the short duration of his enjoyment, and the dark meaning of the seemingly insignificant event, by that accumulation of verbs. He did eat, and drink, and rose up, and went his way. So Esau despised his birthright.

New Testament Commentary

Hebrews 12:16-17, "*Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected for he found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears.*" Profane is BEBELOS, and means to cross the threshold or doorway, an intruder, foot.

Now we may learn first, how profound an influence small temptations yielded to may exert on a life. Many scoffs have been directed against this story, as if it were unworthy of credence that eating a dish of lentils should have shaped the life of a man and of his descendants. But it is not always the case that trifles turn out to be determining points?

Hinges are very small compared with the doors that move on them. Most lives are molded by insignificant events. No temptation is small, for no sin is small, and if the occasion of yielding to sense and the present is insignificant, the yielding is not so. But the main lesson, as already noted, is the madness

of flinging away greater future good for present gratification of sense. One cannot suppose that the spiritual side of the birthright was in the thoughts of either brother. Esau and Jacob alike regarded it only as giving the headship of the family. The first-born got the double portion. It was merely the right of succession, with certain material accompanying advantages, which Jacob coveted and Esau parted with.

But even in regard to merely worldly objects, the man who lives only for the present moment is distinctly beneath him who lives for a future good, however material it may be. Whosoever subordinates the present, and is able to steadily to set before himself a remote object, for which he is strong enough to subdue the desire of immediate gratifications of any sort, is so far better than the man who, like a savage or an animal lives for the instant. A quick fix.

The highest form of nobility is when time is clearly seen to be the lack of eternity, and life's aims are determined with supreme reference to the future beyond the grave. But how many of us are every day doing exactly as Esau did, flinging away a great future, for a small present? A man who lives only for such ends as may be attained on this side of the grave is as profane a person as Esau, and despises his birthright as truly.

He knew that he was hungry and the lentil porridge was good. "What good shall the birthright do me?" He failed to make the effort of mind and imagination needed in order to realize how much of the kind of good that he could appreciate it would do to him. The smell of the smoking food was more to him than far greater good that he could only appreciate by an effort.

A penny held close to the eye could shut out the sun. Resolute effort is needed to prevent the small, intrusive present from blotting out the transcendent greatness of the final future.

And for the lack of such effort, men by the thousands fling themselves away. To sell a birthright for a bowl of lentils was plain folly.

But is it wiser to sell the blessedness and peace of communion with God here and of Heaven hereafter for anything that the Earth can yield to sense or to soul?

Genesis 25:19-26, "*And these are the generations of Isaac. Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac entreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 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. And 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. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red all over like an hairy garment: and they called his name Esau. And 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.*"

How many shrewd men of the highest commercial standing are making as bad a bargain as Esau's? The pottage is hot and comforting, but it is soon eaten, and when the bowl is empty, and the sense of hunger comes back in an hour or two, the transaction does not look quite as advantageous as it did. Esau had many a minute of rueful meditation on his bad bargain before he in vain besought of his father's blessing.

And suspicions of the folly of their choice are apt to haunt men who prefer the present to the future, even before the future becomes the present, and the folly is manifest. "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

So a character like Esau's, though it has many fine possibilities about it and attracts liking, is really of a low type, and may very easily slide into depths of degrading sensualism, and be dead to all nobleness. Enterprise, love of stirring life, impatience of dull plod-

ding, are natural to all young lives. Unregulated, impulsive characters, who live for a moment, and are very sensitive to all material delights, have often an air of generosity and joviality which hides their essential baseness.

For it is base to live for the flesh, either in more refined or more frankly coarse forms. It is base to be incapable of seeing an inch beyond the present. It is base to despise any good that cannot minister to fleeting lusts of fleshly pleasures, and to say of high thought and of ideal aims of any sort, and most of all to say of Christianity, **what good will it do me.**

To estimate such precious things by the standard of gross utility is like weighing diamonds in a grocer's scales. They will do very well for sugar, but not for precious stones. The sacred things of life are not those that do what the Esau's recognize as good. They have another purpose, and are valuable for other ends. Let us take heed, then, that we estimate the things according to their true relative worth, that we live, not for today, but for eternity, and that we suppress all greedy cravings. If we do not, we shall be profane persons like Esau, "who for one morsel of food sold his birthright."

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