

SCAM
ALERT!

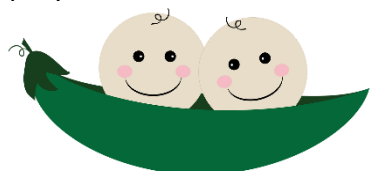
LOOKOUT FOR
COMPUTER
FRAUD



I suppose that almost all of you have been targeted by a scammer at some point. With the advancement of technology scams seem to have recently become much more common. What is a scam? It is trying to obtain money in a deceitful way. The word 'scam' comes from the word 'scamp', meaning mischievous or deceitful. The word has only been in use since around 1963, but scams have been taking place throughout history with people losing their money, property or possessions. Today most of the time, but not in every instance, the intended victim of the scam agrees to hand over bank account details. They have been duped into thinking that money has been taken out of their account, their computer is responding very slowly, a delivery needs to be paid for or someone has left them a legacy. The scammers are very clever at what they do so the requests for the money or bank details sound really, really genuine and it is easy to fall victim to their requests. The constant use of the word 'scam' may be fairly recent, but here is an account of someone who fell for a scam over 3,000 years ago.

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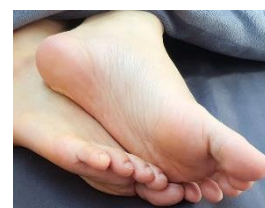
'My name is Esau. I was given that name because when I was born I looked rough and hairy. My mother, Rebekah, seemed to have trouble getting pregnant so my father, Isaac, prayed to God and asked Him to give her a child. Well, God certainly answered his prayers



because she then became pregnant with twins, of which I was the eldest. Apparently my mother was having a lot of discomfort so she asked the Lord what was the matter with her. He told her that she had two children struggling inside her womb and that when they were born the older one would serve the one who was younger.



When my brother Jacob was born, his hand was holding my heel so he was named 'Jacob', which means to follow, be behind or supplant. It was a prediction that he would take my place as the eldest son. When my father died everything that he owned would be divided between his sons, but as the oldest son, I would be given a double share, however, because of a scam by my brother Jacob, that position was about to be changed.



I knew I was my Dad's favourite. He loved to eat the wild game so as I was by nature a hunter, he was often satisfied after one of my hunting trips. One day, when I arrived back home, I was really famished and my brother happened to be cooking some stew. It smelled lovely! I asked Jacob to give me some but instead of being a loving brother and giving me a nice meal, he said that he would give me the stew

if I told him that he could have my birthright. This meant that he would receive my father's blessing and that he would inherit the double share of his possessions instead of myself. Well, I was so hungry that there and then I agreed to his request. Little did I realise at that moment the full consequences of my actions.



When my father, Isaac, was near the end of his life he asked me to go and hunt for some wild game and make his favourite tasty food and he would give me his blessing, so off I went. Unknown to me, my mother, Rebekah, was eavesdropping (Ear-wagging!) and heard what my father had said. Now Jacob was her favourite son and she wanted him to have the birthright instead of me so she very deviously thought up a plan. She sent Jacob to fetch two young goats from our herd nearby and made some goat stew. She gave him some of my clothes to put on, covered his hands and neck with the goat skins and told me to take the stew into my father and pretend that he was Esau. My father fell for the scam and sealed the birthright by giving his blessing.

On my return home I too made some tasty food from the game that I had caught and took it into my father. When my father realised that he had been tricked he was violently angry at the deceit that had taken place. Unfortunately for me, because he had already blessed Jacob, it was legally binding and could not be reversed. I resolved that once my Dad had died I would kill my brother Jacob. My mother was told of my intentions and persuaded Jacob to go at once and stay with my Uncle Laban in Haran and said that she would let him know when my anger had subsided and it was safe for him to return home.



Abraham

Isaac



Jacob

When I initially agreed to let Jacob have my birthright in exchange for a bowl of stew, there was something else that I did not consider at that moment in time. God had blessed my grandad Abraham and made a special covenant promise to him. God said that He would make Abraham into a great nation and that he would be blessed. That covenant promise was then passed down to my father and then it should also have been my inheritance too. By allowing Jacob to have my birthright I not only lost the double share of my father's possessions but also, more importantly, I was considered to be godless because I had thought the covenant promise of God to Abraham was of less value than a bowl of stew. Jacob then became heir of that covenant promise. I was reconciled to Jacob about twenty years later but that covenant promise was never to be mine.'

You can read about this in Genesis 25: 21 – 33 and Genesis 27

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Prayers: Our natural response to the deceit of scammers may be one of annoyance but can I please suggest that we pray about the following:-

That the scammers will come to know Jesus and use their skills to earn an honest living.

That those who are targeted will recognise when something is a scam.

Scams can be extremely upsetting. Some victims have had a great deal of money taken from their accounts, in some cases their hard-earned life savings. Pray for the return of their money in some way and that they will be able to come to terms with what has happened.

If you have managed to recognise a scam and have not fallen victim then thank the Lord for helping you to recognise the situation.

Prayers change situations