

ESAU THE *TAUTUA*: A SOCIO-RHETORICAL READING OF GENESIS 27:30-40.

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by

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Abstract

This thesis is inspired by a personal issue in which my father a Samoan *tautua* (one who serves) does not reap the reward or destiny reserved for the *tautua*, i.e. the *pule* (leadership and authority). According to Samoan logic and tradition the pathway to leadership and authority is through service. Unfortunately for my father, the role was passed on to another who does not strictly fulfil the *tautua* role. As I search through scripture for comfort, I find that the character of Esau in Genesis 27:30-40 experiences the same thing. I have chosen Socio-rhetorical criticism as the method of interpretation with the appropriation of the hermeneutical lens of *tautua*. I wish to show that a Samoan reading or *tautua* reading supports the argument that Esau was unjustly treated. In this dialogue between *tautua* and Genesis 27:30-40, I hope to find important insights which may bring hope to those who find themselves in the same boat.

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DEDICATION

For

Aomalū & Jireh Blessing

In loving memory of my father

Fualau Sone Ioane (1958-2004)

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get rough. May God bless our small family and use our lives in His ministry in the near future.

List of Abbreviations

EBS	Encountering Biblical Studies
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
SRC	Socio-Rhetorical Criticism
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TOTL	The Old Testament Library
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JBPL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership</i>
ABD	The Anchor Bible Dictionary
<i>CTS</i>	<i>Chafer Theological Seminary Journal</i>
CWM	Council for World Missions

I. Introduction

O le ala i le pule o le tautua – this is a well-known Samoan proverb which can be translated as “the pathway to leadership and authority is through service.”¹ According to this Samoan wisdom tradition, it is the destiny of the *tautua* (the one who serves)² to become the *pule* or authority within the family. It is the norm. It is the way things are supposed to be. It is the *FaaSamoa* (Samoan way of life). However, society does not always concur or conform to the norm or the dominant logic. There are times when these traditions are challenged. For example – while it may be a matter of interpretation and perspective – how do we deal with things when they do not turn out the way we expect? How do we respond when the *tautua* does not end up in the designated role of being the *pule*? Furthermore, how do we react when one whom we do not consider as a *tautua* ends up with the leadership role and authority? The motivation for this work stems from my personal observation of my father’s situation as being the *tautua* whose pathway did not lead to the designated leadership role and authority.

From the biblical text, I have chosen to work with the story of Isaac’s blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27:30-40. My main focus however, is on the character of Esau whom I believe my father would relate to as he (Esau) also was apparently cheated from his destined blessing.

I have chosen to use Socio-Rhetorical Criticism – henceforth SRC - to read the biblical text. SRC consists of five different textures, but for this work I will employ only three, i.e. social and cultural texture, inner-texture and ideological texture. The hermeneutical lens which I shall use to interrogate and dialogue with these textures is

¹ Tanuvasa Tofaeono Tavale, *O le Ala I le Pule o le Tautua* (Auckland, Fuelavelave Press: 1999), p. 251.

² This translation is but a simple understanding of the Samoan concept of *tautua*. A more detailed discussion of *tautua* shall follow in chapter two.

the Samoan concept of *tautua*. In this thesis, I attempt to show that Esau can be seen as the *tautua* and in this light confirm that he had been dealt with unjustly. In addition, I shall also briefly highlight a *tautua* observation of Jacob and in the process suggest an alternative role that he plays within the Samoan context.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one focuses on a review of the relevant literature on the Jacob and Esau narratives. This review will provide important information of where the scholarly debate currently lies, and therefore, provide a platform from which I shall add my small contribution. Chapter two will discuss the selected method – SRC – as well as a discussion on the chosen hermeneutical concept – *tautua*. Chapter three will be dedicated to the exegetical process and dialogue. The final section of the thesis will be the drawing of conclusions as well as the discussion of the various implications and applications of the study.

II. Chapter One

Literature Review

The focus of this review is to grasp an understanding of what the scholarly world says regarding Esau's lost blessing. Was there an injustice against Esau? More importantly, did Jacob rightfully attain the blessing or not?

2.1. Support for Jacob

I begin with Ross whom through the use of wordplay in two very important areas, comes to the following conclusions. On one hand from Esau's eyes, Jacob's name which carries the connotation of "to supplant" as named at birth (Gen 25:26), has now taken on a whole new meaning altogether. For Ross, where it was a mere playful notion of taking by the heel and supplanting at birth, it is now a serious case of overreaching and supplanting as a deceiver. Thus, for Ross, the nature of how Esau's blessing was taken away from him was deceitful. On the other hand, another wordplay on the concepts of birthright (*bekorati*) and blessing (*birkati*), show that these two things which belonged to the firstborn were now rightfully Jacob's whom Esau has recently sold his birthright to (Gen 25:29-34). Thus, although the act was deceitful on Jacob's part, Ross suggests that Jacob rightfully attained Isaac's blessing, for it was his.³

Kinder sees all parties guilty, i.e. Isaac, Esau, Rebekah and Jacob. Whether Isaac knew about the selling of the birthright or not, Kinder states that he was aware of the oracle concerning the two boys (Gen 25:23) as he uses these words when he conveys the actual blessing (Gen 27:29). Kinder however, dwells more on Esau's failures –

³ Allen P Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), p.478-480.

especially the selling of the birthright -which may suggest his approval of Jacob attaining the blessing.⁴

Hughes blames Isaac for his favouritism who attempts to bestow the blessing on Esau although he was aware that Esau already sold his birthright to Jacob. Furthermore, although he describes Jacob's name to mean "cheat" Hughes believes that Esau alone is the reason for his setback.⁵ Hughes in my opinion supports the idea that Jacob rightfully gets the blessing.

Breitbart sees the title of deceiver to be more appropriate for the character of Esau. His logic is that Esau did not inform his father that he sold his birthright to his younger brother.⁶

2.2. Support for Esau

Among those who condemn Jacob's actions, leading the way is Gunkel – who from a form critical point of view - divides the narrative into four scenes and refers to the form as similar to a death oracle – where the dying parent pronounces the blessing from deathbed. For Gunkel, these characteristics of the death oracle is somewhat disturbed by the act of deceit which occurs on the part of Rebekah and Jacob. Thus, Esau has been unjustly dealt with and Jacob has no rightful part in the oracle.⁷

Brueggemann builds on Gunkel's division into four scenes. For Brueggemann, scenes one and four should have been the complete story based on the blessing formula⁸ which is spoken by Isaac to Esau in the first scene and carried out by Esau in the fourth.

⁴ Derek Kinder, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary, Vol.1*, TOTC, ed. Donald J Wiseman (Illinois: IVP Academic, 1967), p.192.

⁵ R Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), p. 352-353.

⁶ Sidney Breitbart, "The Problem of Deception in Genesis 27," *JBQ* Vol.29, No.1 (2001), p. 45-47.

⁷ Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), p. 302-307.

⁸ The formula will be explained later under the analysis of the social and cultural texture in chapter 3.

However, the flow of the blessing to be bestowed is interrupted by the deceitfulness of Jacob who is the common factor in scenes two and three. Thus, For Brueggemann, Jacob does not rightfully attain the blessing.⁹

Arnold does not really draw any solid conclusions regarding our questions. Like Kinder, all four characters are guilty of something, i.e. Esau in his marriage to foreign women, Isaac in showing favouritism to Esau, Rebekah and Jacob in the act of deceit. The questions are open, as Arnold does not say what effect Esau's sin has on his blessing. The only thing that is solid, is that Arnold sees Jacob stealing the blessing from Esau.¹⁰ Others who support this idea are Von Rad who labels Jacob's actions as a "monstrous crime."¹¹ Sarna sees Esau as a "victim of a cruel ruse."¹²

Brodie makes it clear that Esau was deceived. He states that Esau's reaction to realising that Jacob stole his blessings, 'was an impression of a powerful sense of loss'. The fact that he sees it as a loss for Esau, definitely tells us that he was unjustly outdone by his brother.¹³

Westermann sees Isaac's blessing as the tradition of a farewell blessing which is a form of transmission of energy from father to the chosen son. For Westermann, there is only one blessing and thus emphasizes further the reason for the struggle between the two brothers which began way before their birth. Like Gunkel and Brueggemann,

⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p.231-236.

¹⁰ Bill T Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis: A Study of its Contents and Issues*, EBS, Eds. Walter A Elwell, Eugene H Merrill (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), p.122-123.

¹¹ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary, Revised Edition*, TOTL (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), p.278-279

¹² Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with new JPS Translation*, The JPS Torah Commentary, Eds. Nahum M. Sarna, Chaim Potok (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 190-194.

¹³ Thomas L Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Westermann also perceives Jacob as a form of intruder who disrupts the traditional blessing ritual between Isaac and Esau.¹⁴

In further support of Esau, Goodnick discusses underlying emotional currents and upheavals in the story, as well as the differing moods and motivations of the brothers, and their reactions to the shared situation. According to Goodnick, whereas Jacob's language clearly portrays intensity as a sign of guilt, Esau's language is calm and natural. For Goodnick, Esau's calmness indicates things are falling into place according to tradition.¹⁵

Spero condemns Jacob's deceitful act. The interesting part of Spero's discussion is the lack of connection between the sale of the birth-right and the attaining of the blessing. While Spero believes that the sale of the birth-right was legitimate, he still perceives Jacob's actions in the attaining of the blessing as deceptive and "morally wrong."¹⁶

Hamilton places Esau's lost blessing within the context of the Jacob/Esau struggle narratives. For Hamilton this the third round, i.e. the first being the struggle at birth and the second is the sale of the birthright. Once again, Jacob is clearly labelled as the deceiver.¹⁷ Finally, Chung's entire dissertation is about arguing Esau's case in contrast to the negative perception of Esau in Old Testament studies.¹⁸

¹⁴ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, translated by David E. Green (London: T & T Clark International, 1987), p. 191-196.

¹⁵ Benjamin Goodnick, "Jacob's Deception of his Father," *JBQ* Vol. 22, No 4. (1994), p. 237-240.

¹⁶ Shubert Spero, "Jacob and Esau: The Relationship Reconsidered," *JBQ* Vol.32, No.4 (2004), p.245-250.

¹⁷ Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 1995), p. 223-228.

¹⁸ II-Seung Chung, "Liberating Esau: A Corrective Reading of the Esau-Jacob Narrative in Genesis 25-36," (Ph.D. Dissertation: The University of Sheffield, 2008).

2.3. Others

There are others who really do not state their minds on any side of the debate, but their discussions of the text are still nevertheless interesting. For Wenham, the major purpose of the story is not to show the deceitful acts of the characters, but to show that the blessing is irrevocable. In avoiding the debate, Wenham points rather to the fact that both men received some form of blessing from Isaac.¹⁹

Although Zucker recognizes Jacob's deception, more emphasis is placed on Isaac as a victim of abuse. For Zucker, Isaac is exposed to betrayal at an early age (Gen 22:9-14) which forced him to live a kind of passive life. His character is more reserved when compared to other patriarchs. In his old age, he once again experienced abuse when he was betrayed by his son Jacob. Zucker however, makes an interesting observation by claiming that the blessing of Jacob was planned all along by Isaac and Rebekah, to ensure that Jacob marries within the family, thus the sending to Laban.²⁰ This raises the question as such theory suggests that the parents were clearly responsible for the decision and they did choose Jacob. But does this mean that Jacob was the rightful owner of the blessing? Or does this further prove the injustice done to Esau?

2.4. Summary

We can see, there are different views and arguments on the whole Jacob and Esau relationship, especially with regards to the blessing in Genesis 27. In the review however, it is clear that support for Esau outweighs the support for Jacob as rightfully attaining the fatherly blessing. Those in support of Jacob base their conclusions mainly on the argument that Jacob had already bought the birthright of the firstborn from Esau

¹⁹ Gordan J Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC (Dallas: World Book Publisher, 1994), p.210-212.

²⁰ David J Zucker, "Isaac Betrayed and Triumphant," *JBQ* Vol 38, No.3 (2010), p.166-174. See also Zucker, "The Deceiver Deceived: Rereading Genesis 27," *JBQ* Vol.39, No 1 (2011).

(Gen 25:29-34). On the other hand, supporters of Esau see the deceptiveness as a clear sign of unjust actions and injustice to Esau. The review also acknowledges others who focus on other areas of the narrative other than the conflict between the two brothers. In light of this work, I wish to offer my support to the Esau group through the contribution of my *tautua* reading of the text.

III. Chapter Two

Method & Methodology

This chapter shall be dedicated to clarifying the chosen method of reading, i.e. SRC. The emphasis and limited capacity of this work will not allow a thorough analysis of SRC, thus, I will provide only a brief discussion of its beginning, main features and purpose. I shall then conclude with a detailed discussion of the Samoan concept of *tautua*; which will function as the lens I shall use to approach and dialogue with the biblical text.

3.1. Socio-Rhetorical Criticism (SRC)

The term “socio-rhetorical” was introduced by Robbins²¹ into New Testament studies in 1984. Socio-rhetorical analysis focuses and nurtures a dialogic relationship between various approaches and disciplines and it’s relation with history.²² In other words, socio-rhetorical analysis like other modern methods of reading the bible today have moved beyond the tradition historical approach to emphasize the importance of the multifaced nature of social and cultural discourses within the biblical text. Although Robbins and most of the early works focused on the text of the New Testament,²³ even

²¹ Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

²² David B. Gowler, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and its Receptions,” *JSNT* Vol.33, No.2 (2010), 191-206.

²³ While most of the early works on SRC focussed on the New Testament texts, Robbins does open up the door to include insights from later materials and approaches well into the 21st century. This also opens the avenue for earlier texts such as the Hebrew bible and the various competing discourse which are found in it. Viau has already analysed Psalm 91 with the use of inner texture analysis; see Matthew F. Viau, “Inner Texture Analysis of Psalm 91: The Enhancement of Transformational Leadership Theory,” *JBPL* Vol 8, No.1 (2016), p.99-113. In this work I will survey three textures in Genesis 27.

earlier studies carried out by fellow Samoan ministers²⁴ I am moving beyond the New Testament to other texts, i.e. the Hebrew bible.

The development of SRC can be roughly discussed in four stages. The first stage was the focus on the social and cultural dynamics of a text. The second saw the introduction of the multi-textures of the text with the reprinted *Jesus the Teacher* (1992).²⁵ The third stage was dealing with the competing hermeneutical approaches of the time, especially the historical and historical-theological. In the process, the theory on the multi-textures of the text was developed further with the emergence of two other works, i.e. *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*²⁶ and *Exploring the Texture of Texts*²⁷ the final stage saw the emergence of multiple discourses and the perfecting of ideological texture.

3.1.1. Tapestry and Multiple Textures

The metaphor of tapestry and its multiple textures is very central to Robbins theory. In Gowler's explanation;`

When we look at a thick tapestry from different angles, we see different 'textures': configurations, patterns and images inherent in its warp and woof. In a similar way, when we explore a text from

²⁴ Nofoaiga reads the concept of discipleship in Matthews gospel with the appropriation of the Smaona hermeneutical lens of *tautuaileva* (serve in between the space). – Vaitusi Nofoaiga, “Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Auckland, Auckland, 2014). Stowers employs names as hermeneutics using Fofogaolevai to read Mark 1:1-15 – Clarke Stowers, “Names and Hermeneutics to Read Texts: Fofogaolevai and John the Baptizer (Mark 1:1-15), (B.Th. thesis, Malua Theological College, Malua, 2017). Puaina incorporates the Samoan concept of faaaloaloga to read the miracle of ‘Feeding the 500’ in Matthew 14:13-21 – Seumaninoa Puaina, “The Feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14:13-21): A New Missionary Paradigm for the Congregational Christian Church Samoa”, (B.D. Thesis, Malua Theological College, Malua, 2012).

²⁵ Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, reprint paperback with new introduction and additional indexes; (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

²⁶ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

²⁷ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

different angles, we see multiple textures of meanings, convictions, values, emotions and actions.²⁸

While additional textures continue to be developed, the established five textures are inner texture, inter texture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture. Of these I have chosen to work with inner texture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture.

The inner texture deals with the final form of the text. Here we can appropriate literary critical methods to analyse the biblical text, whether it be through textual elements, grammar, structure even to its narrative forms and the production of meaning.²⁹ This analysis will be central in order to achieve a close reading of the text and its rhetorical features in which will reproduce meaning for this work.

Social and Cultural texture deals with society and culture as well as societal behaviour common to the general understanding. Furthermore, it also looks at how these societal norms are treated within the text in relation to the various discourse, dominant and dominated.³⁰ This shall also be of great importance to this work as the societal concept and ritual of farewell blessing appears to be the dominant ideal and reason for the conflict within the Jacob and Esau narrative in the book of Genesis.

Finally, I will also assess the ideological texture which deals with alliances and conflicts embedded in the language and rhetoric of the text.³¹ Ideological texture will be important as I aim to assess possible conflicts and contradictions of the ideological world which produced the text. This will help us confirm the conflicting groups which are represented by the conflicting discourse in the text.

²⁸ Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," p. 195.

²⁹ Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," p. 195.

³⁰ Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," p. 195.

³¹ Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," p. 195.

Upon saying that, the assessment and scrutinizing of the textures shall be done through the Samoan hermeneutical lens of *tautua* which is the focus of the following discussion.

3.2. Samoan concept of *Tautua*

Tautua is a complex word as it can be used in the Samoan language either as a verb or noun. According to Pratt, as a noun it refers to “a servant,” while in the context of a verb, it means “to serve.”³² The word is a combination of a variety of words, however for this paper we shall focus on two, i.e. *tau* and *tua*. According to Apulu the word ‘*tau*’ carries various connotations,

Firstly, it means “Ua taunuu le faamoemoe’ (to accomplish a challenge). Secondly, “Ia taula le paopao poo le vaa” (to anchor or moor a boat or canoe). Thirdly, it means ‘pluck’ (season to pick the fruit from) this refers to the season of a young taulealea stage in life, which he will now be ready to serve in his aiga, lotu, nuu, itumalo and atunuu. And Lastly ‘weather’, this refers to the Taulealea abstaining his service through all types of weather in the sense of aiga, lotu, nuu, itumalo and atunuu as there are many ups and downs experienced through the life of taulealea.³³

The word *tua* also has a variety of meanings,

The word ‘*tua*’ means at the back ‘e tu mai i tua e le sau i luma, e galue mai i tua’. This refers to the Taulealea serving from the positions of being behind the matais of the aiga and nuu. This stems from the aiga settling within a village where the matais fale is in the front and the taulealea’s house is in the rear. Also means ‘depends on’ “lona uiga o le upu e tua iai, e pei o le matai e tua i le taulealea o le aiga i le faiga o feau ma galuega faatino. Tautua- The word tautua means ‘servanthood’ o le taulealea o loo tau mai i tua poo o loo faia ana galuega mai i tua, e iai lona taimi poo le taimi i lona olaga ua sauni ai e tulai. This refers to a stage of life that a Samoan young male

³² Pratt, “Tautua” in *Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan* (Apia: Samoa, 1911), p.306.

³³ Melvin Taupulega Jr. Apulu, “Tautua Faatamalii: (Servant hood with Absolute Integrity) Engaging with Samoan Young People,” (MPhil. Thesis, Massey University, 2010), p. 15-16.

is at in which it is his duty to serve his matai, aiga, lotu, nuu, itumalo and atunuu as he will become one with his matai.³⁴

It is clear that Apulu defines *tautua* as “servanthood” of the young untitled men whose duty are to serve the *matai* (chief) and *aiga* (family) from the back. This falls well with Nofoaiga’s discussion of the concept *tautua*. Nofoaiga discusses three separate dimensions of the *tautua*. First, *tautua* as a concept not only signifies the “servant status of the untitled men in the Samoan chiefly system,” but it also relates to his moral values and obligations to fulfil his services for his family. Second, *tautua* is a sense of place where it is interrelated to one’s belonging to a family. Third, *tautua* in enacted forms relates to ones roles as the *tautua*.³⁵

Like Apulu, Nofoaiga directs attention to the untitled men within the Samoan community. We can also see the definitions of the two syllables that the service must start from the back rather than the front. The servanthood status also means that the service must be conducted in a respectful manner towards the *matai* or leader who is in front – as opposite *tua*. In this work I will also embrace the *tautua* to refer to the service and servanthood of the untitled men.

3.2.1. Roles of the Tautua

Nofoaiga describes in detail the role of *tautua* by elaborating more on the syllables ‘*tau*’ and ‘*tua*’. He paints a picture of the ideal *tautua* that lives, breathes and promotes *tautua*. Firstly he defines the role in relation to the *matai*- the leader of the family. As mentioned above, *tau* is associated with the service to the family and *tua* positions where the service is carried out, i.e. from the back. To elaborate, the back space illustrates the positioning of the *tautua*, for instance they serve the *matai* not from

³⁴ Apulu, “Tautua Faatamalii,” p. 17.

³⁵ Nofoaiga, “Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel,” (University of Auckland, 2014), p.40-44.

the front as it breaches the personal space (*va*). The serving from the back highlights a great level of respect for space between the *tautua* and the *matai*, i.e. *tautua tausi-va* (respecting the space).³⁶

This location also represents how the *tautua* is the last to eat. In the process of the family meal, the *tautua* serves first and eats last. When the *matai* and family finish eating, whatever is left is consider his (*tautua*).³⁷ Not only does he eats last, but he is more likely also the last to sleep. The *tautua*'s residence is also in the back, i.e. behind the *matai* and never in the front. Tools and equipment for everyday chores can be found at the back with the *tautua*.³⁸ Furthermore, *tua* also carries the notion of 'dependence upon,' i.e. '*e tua iai le matai ma le aiga*' – the *matai* and family depend on the *tautua*. The *tautua* who fulfils these roles and puts his family first, is a good *tautua* and shows promising signs of becoming a good leader in the future.

Another definition of *tautua* I would like to address is Kolia³⁹ where he uses a more of a physical action to illustrate what he thinks *tautua* can be seen as. His emphasis lies in the last syllable '*tua*' as it illustrates a backbone that everyone relies on. In other words the *matai* and family have their complete trust to depend on the *tautua* in anything needed. For instance, the *tautua* will be the first one to be called in the event of chores because they are expected to deliver to satisfaction.

³⁶ Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel," p. 44

³⁷ Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel," p. 44

³⁸ Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel," p. 44-45

³⁹ Brian Kolia, "The Liberation of the Women through Tautua a Samoan Reading of Songs of Songs 1:5-8: In Council for World Mission Religion Meeting: Samoa Meeting Theme: Dancing in Babylonian" (CWM Regional Meeting, Apia, Samoa, 2015), p.4.

3.2.2. Various Types of *Tautua*

Tautua is also known to have different attributes which can be used to describe the way and how the service was undertaken. *Tautua Matavela* – (*mata* – eyes, face; *vela* – cooked) not a literal image of a cooked face, but rather a face that is always exposed to open fires especially in times of cooking.⁴⁰ *Tautua Matalilo* – (*mata* – eyes, face; *lilo* – unseen, hidden). Service is done behind the scenes which emphasises the fact that good service does not require supervision. *Tautua Toto* – (*toto* – blood) service includes bloodshed. Not literal, but more emphasises service that is fully committed and willing to sacrifice anything. This *tautua* is highly appreciated in the context of a Samoan, because it shows service that has no boundaries.⁴¹ *Tautua Aitaumalele* – service from a distance which can refer to a family member who lives overseas but supports and contributes to all family needs at home. *Tautua nofotuavae* - The word *nofotuavae* means – to sit behind or at the feet of someone. This *tautua* exemplifies the person who stands behind his/her matai/leader/agency ready to serve.

Despite these positive features, there are also negative connotations of *tautua*. A common one used is *tautua pa'ō* - (*pa'ō* translated as sound) – which relates to service filled with complaints and unsatisfactory service.⁴² This also shows the lack of focus and emphasis regarding his duties and services; at the same time, such service shows a poor representation of the *tautua faaSamoa*.

3.2.3. *Tautua* Hermeneutic

It is evident that servanthood and service is a key factor in *tautua*. We can argue that the core of *tautua* is about service. By understanding and breaking down the

⁴⁰ Government, "Vaaifetu- Working with Samoan Families".

⁴¹ Sam Amosa, "Did Jesus Sweat Blood – in the Light of Tautua Toto," (B.Th. Thesis, Malua Theological College, 2010), p 2.

⁴² Amosa, "Did Jesus Sweat Blood," p. 4.

syllables '*tau*' and '*tua*' we have now established the positioning where the *tautua* conducts his service from; ie- the back. The back also resembles the time the *tautua* is assigned to meet his needs such as eating; which is last. After all a good *tautua* shows commitment and prioritises the *matai* and family first. He is the backbone of the family in whom the family also rely upon. Furthermore, this great service is usually acknowledged and rewarded in due time, i.e. according to Samoan wisdom tradition, "*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*" – the pathway to leadership is through service (good service). Finally, the *tautua* deals with all types of preparations in the daily life and needs of the family. He is the one who is in charge of the plantations and the growing and nurturing of food. He takes care of livestock and even becomes a fisherman when it is required of him. Thus, we may see that another very important aspect of a good *tautua* is doing hard work and labour.

These are the various aspects of the *tautua* lens or hermeneutic which shall be central when analysing Esau and Jacob, i.e. who fulfils the roles of the *tautua*?

IV. Chapter Three

Exegesis

This chapter now appropriates the method of SRC to scrutinize the chosen text, i.e. Gen 27:30-40. As mentioned in the discussion of the method, I will be analysing three textures through the hermeneutical lens of the *tautua*, i.e. inner texture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture. I have decided to commence with a discussion on social and cultural due to the central importance of the social tradition of blessings. Once the cultural element has been established, I shall then attempt a close reading of the text or inner texture, to be completed with the analysis of the ideological texture.

4.1. The Text

³⁰As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting. ³¹He also prepared savory food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that you may bless me."

³²His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your firstborn son, Esau." ³³Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!"

³⁴When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, me also, father!" ³⁵But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." ³⁶Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" ³⁷Isaac answered Esau, "I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I

do for you, my son?" ³⁸Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

³⁹Then his father Isaac answered him: "See, away from ⁴⁰the fatness of the earth shall your home be, and away from ⁴¹the dew of heaven on high. ⁴²By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you break loose, you shall break his yoke from your neck."⁴³

4.2. Social and Cultural Texture

Once again, this element of the method will focus on social and cultural traditions. In the case of Genesis 27, the concept and practice of blessing from parent to child is central.

4.2.1. Blessings & Curses

The Hebrew root בָּרַךְ (*barak*) means "to bless" and as a noun it is בְּרָכָה (*berakah*) meaning "blessing." The root has close associations with the terms denoting to prosper, to show kindness, to act favorably – hence the reference to those who are blessed as being the happy (Ps. 1:1).⁴⁴ Curses are also worth a mention here as they make up the other end of the dichotomy. The word קִלְלָה "to curse" is normally used to oppose the blessing above. While blessings and curses are usually bestowed directly from a deity (Gen 1:22, 28; 2:3; 12:2; Ex 20:11, Job 1:10, Isa 51:2), they are also initiated from human beings, especially the clergy to invoke divine blessings (Gen 14:19; Num 6:22, 27; Deut 10:8).⁴⁵

⁴³ Extracted from the NRSV.

⁴⁴ William J. Urbrock, "Blessing and Curses" in *ABD*, Vol 1, Ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 755-756.

⁴⁵ Laughlin John, "Blessing and Cursing," in *NIDB*, Vol 1, Eds. Katharine D. Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), p.477-478.

This work will focus directly on the blessing which is evident in the chosen text. The naming of the blessing varies among scholars, e.g. Hamilton refers to it as “deathbed blessing.”⁴⁶ Westermann refers to it as a “father’s farewell blessing” and points out at the same time the blessing formula.⁴⁷ Urbrock refers to this as the passing on of favour from one generation to another, i.e. before the other passes on.⁴⁸ As mentioned, it is clear that this is the type of blessing we see Isaac preparing to bestow upon his son Esau.

One major element of this blessing is the inheritance of the firstborn. The firstborn should lawfully receive a double portion of all that the father possesses (Deut 21:15-17).⁴⁹ If this is the case, then we may assume that Isaac’s division of all he had would be in three parts, i.e. a double portion for the firstborn and the remaining portion for the younger son. Others have argued that this double portion to the firstborn was only a later development in the Promised land, however, we already see this double portion being practiced earlier (Gen 48:14).

Another talking point here is the whole ritual or social practice of the transmitting of the blessings. According to Westermann, there are five common elements of the blessing ritual, first is the “summoning” where the father summons the son to be blessed. Here, he is sent to prepare food. Upon his return, the second element is the “identification.” This may not be a major element but for old men on a deathbed, it is a valid stage. Certainly, in Isaac’s case as he was considered blind, thus it was required. The third element is to “eat” the food. This not only functions to give physical strength

⁴⁶ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, *Old Testament*, The IVP Bible Background Commentary (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2000), p.59. See also Anne K. Davis, “Israel’s Inheritance: Birthright of the Firstborn,” in *CTS Journal* Vol.13. No.1. (Spring, 2008), p. 81.

⁴⁷ Westermann, *Genesis*, p.192.

⁴⁸ Urbrock, “Blessing and Curses,” p. 757.

⁴⁹ Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, *Old Testament*, p.58. Davis discusses additional benefits and responsibilities of the firstborn. - Davis, “Israel’s Inheritance: Birthright of the Firstborn,” p. 81.

to the parent, but it also symbolised a meal of celebration as one life is coming to an end, and the transferral of blessing to the next. After the meal, the son will then “approach and be touched” by the parent to confirm identity before the final element which is to “bestow the blessing.”⁵⁰ This blessing formula of the ritual is important to the text as we see a continuous repetition of the combination of verbs throughout. While it was first spoken by Isaac to Jacob in the beginning of chapter 27, Rebekah repeats it to Jacob. Furthermore, the narrator repeats it when Jacob’s actions are described. Finally, these words are seen come out of the mouth of Esau who is about to learn that he no longer has double portion.

The final part of this discussion is the possible loss of this inheritance and blessing for the firstborn. For Davis, commitment and diligent service to God is a major requirement for the firstborn to maintain the blessings.⁵¹ Should the firstborn fail to meet these standards, it is well within the rights of the patriarch to bestow on another.

4.2.2. Blessing and *Tautua*

It is obvious that one major difference between the ancient Israelite tradition of blessing bestowal and the passing of the *pule*⁵² in the Samoa traditions is that the element of how one ascends to the leading roles. In the Israelite tradition, the blessing was reserved or is the right of the firstborn whereas the Samoan tradition, the outgoing *pule* has the authority to choose whomever he sees fit. As the Samoan saying goes, the

⁵⁰ Westermann, *Genesis*, p.192.

⁵¹ Davis, “Israel’s Inheritance: Birthright of the Firstborn,” p. 93.

⁵² The term ‘*pule*’ is a command, an order, a decision and/or authority. In the Samoan context, the high chief is the one who normally holds this authority or *pule*. He is responsible for caring for the family possessions or “*measina*” (eg land, houses, family titles and name, etc.). The high chief also has the right to choose a successor when he feels his time is almost done. The *pule* can also be seen as a blessing, as a reward of the service or *tautua*. The reward of good service is *pule*, and is evident in our discussion of the “*tautua*” in the previous chapter. George Pratt, “Pule” in *Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan* (Apia: Samoa, 1911) p.730.

pathway to authority and leadership is through service, thus, in most cases, the *tautua* usually ends up being chosen as the future leader. While some argue that Isaac does have the right to choose the firstborn,⁵³ should the firstborn fail to commit and serve in the manner required, from a *tautua* perspective, I still uphold that Esau deserved the blessings. Even the best of the *tautua* is not without flaws and weaknesses, but they are overlooked as they have still proven themselves worthy of the leadership role. Despite his marriage to the Hittite women being the blemish on his record (Gen 26:34-35), Esau still is in my opinion the closest thing to a *tautua* when compared to Jacob.

On that note I wish to revisit Zucker's point where he argues that the chaos in the bestowing of blessing ritual was all premeditated by both Isaac and Rebekah in a plot to ensure Jacob does not follow the footsteps of Esau and his marriage to foreign women (Gen 26:34-35).⁵⁴ In other words, Jacob was destined to end up with Laban his mother's brother and hopefully in the process marry one of Laban's daughters. The point is this theory suggests that Isaac in particular was aware that Jacob was in front of him and the one receiving the blessing. In support of this we may take note of Rebekah's words to Jacob in verse 13; "*Let your curse be on me my son...*" Can curses really be transferred? If so, this can signify Rebekah as a loving mother, on the other hand, if the curse is not transferrable, how is it then can Rebekah send her son into such a risky situation, i.e. taking the risk of being cursed. For me, I feel that Rebekah was confident that there would be no cursing as Isaac was merely awaiting Jacob so that he could complete the blessing ritual.

From this dialogue, we learn two things, first, Isaac knowing all that was unfolding means that Jacob was chosen, which is far from the Israelite way of

⁵³ Davis, "Israel's Inheritance: Birthright of the Firstborn," p. 93.

⁵⁴ Zucker, "Isaac Betrayed and Triumphant," p.166-174. _____ "The Deceiver Deceived: Rereading Genesis 27," (2011).

bestowing the blessing on the firstborn. In other words, Isaac's practices are more Samoan than Hebrew. The second is the text's critique of the Samoan practice of the transferral of the *pule*. It is obvious that Isaac's choice was dictated by personal agenda. Thus, the weakness in the Samoan system which hands the authority to the *pule* to choose, i.e. sometimes the decision maybe unjust when based on personal agenda and emotions.

4.3. Inner Texture

4.3.1. Placement of Genesis 27:30-40

Before we move on to the text's literary features, I want to discuss the chosen text in light of its larger literary contexts. Firstly, while the chosen text is obviously part of the history of the Israelite people, this discussion and effect will have its place in the ideological discussion. To narrow it down, this text also plays its role in the narratives of the patriarchs (Gen 12-50). At this stage however, I wish to discuss the chosen text and its function within the Jacob and Esau narratives (Gen 25:19-36:43).

And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." (Gen 25:23)

This word which was spoken regarding Jacob and Esau, clearly signifies a life of struggle, tension and conflict between the two brothers and eventually between two people or nations. This ongoing struggle between the two is evident in the text. Some scholars refer to the struggles as separate rounds in a fight or match up.⁵⁵ Where the first was the struggle at birth (Gen 25:22-26), the second round was the selling of the birthright (Gen 25:29-34), and finally our text is referred to as round three with the loss

⁵⁵ Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.302-307.

of the blessing meant for Esau to Jacob. Therefore, it should not be surprising that the chosen text narrates and continues this conflict between the brothers.

In the more immediate context of chapter 27 alone, we turn to the observations of Gunkel⁵⁶ and Brueggemann.⁵⁷ Whilst it was Gunkel who divided chapter 27 into four scenes, it is Brueggemann who makes an interesting structural observation in which our text can find its place.

Scene I.	(vv.1-4)	The father prepares to bless his older son
Scene II.	(vv.5-17)	The mother schemes for her younger son
Scene III.	(vv.18-29)	The younger son deceives the father
Scene IV.	(vv.30-40)	The father grieves with his older son. ⁵⁸

Before I discuss this, I wish to re-present the above scenes focusing on the characters to make an easy sense of Brueggemann's point.

Scene I	-	Isaac and Esau
Scene II	-	Rebekah and Jacob
Scene III	-	Jacob and Isaac
Scene IV	-	Esau and Isaac

For Brueggemann, according to tradition and the practice of transferring of the blessing and favour, the exercise should have been fully reported in scenes I and IV. In other words, if the blessing ritual had gone according, the narrative would have only required scenes I and IV. Unfortunately, according to Brueggemann, this simple narrative has been disrupted by scenes II and III.⁵⁹ In terms of characters, the simple narrative of Isaac and Esau or rather Isaac blessing Esau is interrupted by the actions

⁵⁶ Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.302-307.

⁵⁷ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 231-233.

⁵⁸ Extracted from Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p.231.

⁵⁹ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p.231.

and story of Jacob who is the common factor in scenes II and III. This intrusion by Jacob is also evident in the chosen text (Gen. 27:30-40) and will be discussed in detail under the next section.

4.3.2. Opening-Middle-End

As Robbins has detailed, the goal of inner texture⁶⁰ is exploring the communication within the characters (subject, object) within the text. The reader must engage and activate the information that is not revealed within the text. This part of communication in the text is brought to life by the reader (eg- ability to speak, hear, act, smell, etc), in order to understand the text. Therefore, part of the inner texture section can also require the analysis of the story and plot, in other words the narrative structure. Our chosen text – which is scene IV in Brueggemann’s division – will be divided into three stages, i.e. opening, middle and the end. I have used the information above in my analysis of this rhetorical unit and in the analysis of the character of Esau in relation to the blessing, this interpretation will also support Brueggemann’s structural conclusion of Jacob being an intruder.

Opening	-	Genesis 27: 30-32
Middle	-	Genesis 27: 33-37
End	-	Genesis 27: 38-40

In the opening scene it is clear that Esau comes to complete the final elements of the ritual and receive the blessing. Two things can be said about Esau in the opening. First is that the expectation here for Esau is to receive the blessing reserved for the firstborn, i.e. the double portion. Second, we can tell by the language of the text and the

⁶⁰ According to Robbins Inner Texture is the inner texture of a text appears primarily among the implied author, the narrator and the characters, who work together to communicate a message. Various literary critics have displayed a horizontal diagram to exhibit this communication process, ‘the whole narrative-communication situation’, and this is the beginning point for building a socio-rhetorical model for interpretation.

mood that Esau is calm which may suggest that he is content and happy to be near the end of the process of receiving the blessing.⁶¹

The middle section is the dialogue between Isaac and Esau in which both have come to the realisation that Isaac has mistakenly bestowed the blessing on another, i.e. Jacob. Here we see a sudden change of mood and emotions from calmness to the stage of panic.⁶² Isaac is described as **חָרַד** (*charad*) terrified, a trembling also experienced by Joseph's brothers when arrested (Gen 42:28), people at Mt Sinai (Ex 19:16), etc. Furthermore, this verb is complemented by the feminine noun **חָרָדָה** (*charadah*) trembling as emphasis and intensifying Isaac's trembling; i.e. as a noun, it is as if his fear and trembling has come to life, personified as a woman. This just goes to show how shocked Isaac became at the possibility of what would happen. On the other hand, Esau's cry also occurs as a verb and complemented by a feminine noun. It is thus evident that Isaac's extreme panic is matched by Esau's painful cry.⁶³

The end (Gen 27:38-40) sees the bestowal of a reserved blessing on Esau. The observation is the immense change of mood and expectancy between the opening and the end. Whereas Isaac and Esau both appeared calm in the opening but they now portray a sense of panic and sadness. Esau had expected the double portion in the opening but in the end only appears to have received one. The question is why? Why is there a dramatic change in events? Although Jacob is passive in the middle, his name is mentioned once. Here, we see the play of words with Jacob's name **יַעֲקֹב** and the word **עָקַב** supplant, cheat in Esau's question. For Esau, Jacob has cheated him from his

⁶¹ Goodnick discusses clearly the various moods of these characters in the language. Esau is always seen as calm in contrast to Jacob and Rebekah who appear more tense and guilty of wrongdoing. - Goodnick, "Jacob's Deception of his Father," p. 237-240.

⁶² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 211.

⁶³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, p. 211.

rightful blessing. A sentiment also echoed by the old man Isaac – “...*your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing.*” (Gen 27:35). Thus the answer or reason for the change in mood from calm and happy to sadness, is none other than Jacob. He is also the reason for the change from double to a single portion of the inheritance. In light of Brueggemann’s structural theory of intrusion, Jacob once again intrudes and causes the change in events and emotions.

4.3.3. Genesis 27:30-40 and *Tautua*

As mentioned in chapter two, the *tautua* is based on service of an untitled man instead of being the firstborn. It is clear that Esau is Isaac’s favourite son because of his role as a hunter (Gen 25:28, 27:1-4). Isaac’s call to Esau shows that he was a responsible man, and that he was a man who was accustomed to performing his duties in caring for the family. It is not likely that Esau hunted for Isaac alone. There is no reason to believe that Esau has not provided game for his whole family. If so, then Esau was able to do the hunting which Isaac and Jacob are not able to do. A man in a man’s world, the positive assessment of his character is reinforced in the narrative.

This explicitly reflects the nature of a *tautua*, someone who hunts, farms, grows, prepares food for their family. A *tautua* will have pig farms, plantations and chicken farms, etc for family sustenance. Isaac’s words, ‘*Then prepare for me savory food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat.....*’ (Gen 27:4) further illustrates the roles of the *tautua*. Someone who prepares food for their elder. The words ‘*such as I like*’ reveal that Esau knows exactly how his father likes the meals to be cooked, thus, Esau has prepared, cooked and served meals for Isaac numerous times.

So from this aspect of service to the elder, Esau can be seen as fulfilling the role of a *tautua* in the Samoan family. Therefore, from the Samoan wisdom tradition, the *tautua* is the pathway to the *pule*. So it is only right that Esau should have been on the

receiving end of the double blessing from Isaac. The fact that he missed out is considered injustice from a Samoan perspective.

On the other hand, the text also contributes its thoughts to the practice of the Samoan *tautua*. Whereas *tautua* whose path does not end with the *pule* – despite being diligent and trustworthy in carrying out his duties, - will have ill feelings and strong sense of disappointment, it will also be a struggle to fulfil his duties as a *tautua* under the new *pule*. In the final verses of the chosen text, we come across Isaac's words to Esau. Some have questioned whether this final word can be considered as a blessing more than a curse in which it appears.⁶⁴ Although the words here are the very words used to bless Jacob, the contradiction is that Jacob is destined to receive and Esau will not. This may suggest that Esau has been cursed in contrast to the blessing given to Jacob.

For me, I prefer to think more positive of these words in light of the division of the patriarch's things, i.e. while the firstborn is entitled to double portion, everyone else is entitled to one. I prefer to see this also as a blessing; not the one that Esau was after, but a blessing nevertheless. We know from history that Esau also was blessed, i.e. just as Jacob fathered the nation of Israel, a nation also emerged from the person of Esau, Edom. So, for the *tautua*, it is clear that this is not the end of the world as there is still hope and blessings for all. Despite the *pule* falling into the hands of someone else, the text encourages the *tautua* to focus on whatever blessing is reserved for them. What this blessing maybe will be elaborated in the implications of this study.

⁶⁴ Walton, Matthews, Chavalas, *Old Testament*, p.58.

4.4. Ideological Texture – Whose interests? Whose Story?

Just to recap, the ideological texture deals with alliances and conflicts embedded in the language and rhetoric of the text.⁶⁵ A strict ideological analysis would require a serious consideration of the social and historical world which produced the text as it is the ideologies of that world which are embedded in the text's rhetoric. Ideological critics refer to that analysis as the 'extrinsic analysis.'⁶⁶ However, for this paper, we will follow the distinction already made by Assis who looks at the Esau and Jacob conflict as a mirror image of Edom and Israel on a bigger scale.⁶⁷ From here we shall entertain an ideological reflection based on the conflicting voices of Israel and Edom

4.4.1. Conflicting Voices in Text

From an ideological perspective, Jacob is always destined to win and overcome any of his competition in the stories, i.e. because of the fact that this is the history of the nation of Israel whom descended from Jacob. Esau on the other hand also fathered a nation, i.e. Edom, however, this is not their story or rather it is their story, only from the eyes of Jacob and Israel.

In our text, although what Jacob has done is considered by many as unjust and deceitful, ideologically it is balanced out in the text by Isaac's acknowledgement that the blessing is irrevocable and Jacob is surely blessed (Gen 27:33). Furthermore, while tradition reports that such blessings are reserved for the firstborn, we do find in Israel's history that this practice of the younger overtaking the elder appears to be a common theme in Israel's history. Antwi refers to this as the "younger-brother motif" which

⁶⁵ Gowler, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," p. 195.

⁶⁶ Gale A. Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," in *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 148.

⁶⁷ Elie Assis, *Identity in Conflict: The Struggle between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel* (Pennsylvania: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

exists in the book of Genesis. Antwi names the relationship between Jacob and Esau in light of others with similar situations; e.g. Abel favoured over Cain (Gen 4:1-16), Isaac over Ishmael (Gen 16; 21:1-21), Joseph over his elder brothers (Gen 37:2-36, 39-50), Ephraim over Manasseh (Gen 48:8-20).⁶⁸ In light of this, our text also matches this ongoing theme as Jacob takes that which belonged to the firstborn. The repetition of this theme in the history of Israel may well be to legitimize and even solidify Israel's place as the privilege – not only between Israel and Edom but in relation to other neighbouring nations - as it was a legitimate blessing.

Esau on the other hand and all that he represented were destined to fail, in other words, their fate was already sealed. The fact that they are mentioned in contrast to Jacob and Israel in the text shows that the opposing voice exists and is that of Esau, Edom and other nations. This conflict however is resolved in the text by Yahweh's approval of the elder's servanthood status to the younger (Gen 25:23).⁶⁹

4.4.2. Ideological Texture and *Tautua*

If there is one thing that the text has reminded the Samoan practice is that the *pule* is always the one in charge and can rule in any way he pleases. In other words, we are reminded that the *pule* and the *tautua* will not always see eye to eye as the Samoan wisdom saying may portray, i.e. the pathway to leadership and authority is through service. The text asks the question; what then is the next step when this logic breaks down? We know that the dominant voice is the *pule* and as the text suggests, the dominant voice has their own personal agendas. It is these agendas which shape the

⁶⁸ Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, "Younger-brother motif in Genesis as an object of Love and Hatred in the Family: Tensions, Conflicts and Reflection for the Contemporary African Family," in *Old Testament Essays*, Vol.30. No.1. (Pretoria, 2017), p. 11-29. We can also consider David and Solomon's cases as being favoured over the elder brothers.

⁶⁹ Antwi, "Younger-brother motif in Genesis as an object of Love and Hatred in the Family: Tensions, Conflicts and Reflection for the Contemporary African Family," p. 21.

histories of people, families, etc... especially when they come between the *tautua* and his so-called destiny of becoming the *pule*. In the story, this agenda required Jacob to intrude and take the blessing of the firstborn. Likewise, in the Samoan context, the personal agenda of the *pule* can result in someone intruding and taking the leadership roles over the *tautua*.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, we return to the argument put forth in the beginning. Did the thesis show that Esau can be seen as the *tautua* and confirm that he had been dealt with unjustly?

First, after defining what *tautua* is, we can agree that Esau best suits the role and characteristics of a *tautua* based on his service within his household (eg- hunting, food preparation, service, etc). The fact that Esau knew his father's preference of how his meal was to be cooked is evidence of this ongoing service. As opposed to Jacob, it was Rebekah who prepared the meal for Isaac, bringing into question Jacob's services to his father. Furthermore, the fact that we can possibly see Isaac as practicing more like a Samoan *pule* who has the authority to choose rather than follow the Israelite blessing of the firstborn, confirms that Esau is the *tautua*.

Second, was Esau dealt with unjustly? From a *tautua* perspective, "*O le ala I le pule o le tautua*" (The pathway to leadership and authority is through service.) and because Esau fits the *tautua* role, he was destined to become the *pule*. The fact that it was bestowed on Jacob through deceit screams out injustice. We noted that despite his marriage to the Hittite women displeasing his parents (Gen 26:34-35), it can be considered a mere blemish on his record. This argument can be further strengthened by assessing the character of Jacob in light of the *tautua*.

From the Samoan perspective Jacob does not meet the requirements of a *tautua*. He is favoured by his mother Rebekah (Gen 25:28) and the fact that Rebekah prepared the meal from the goat kid he was instructed to get, indicates he is not like Esau who knows what Isaac likes. For such knowledge only comes through experience and

multiple services offered to Isaac. If anything from within the Samoan context and reading, Jacob would appear to best suit the role of a Samoan *feagaiga*,⁷⁰ which is generally lived out by the *tuafafine* (sister) within the Samoan household.⁷¹ All domesticated chores are assigned and performed by the *feagaiga*. We may also take note Jacob's words in v.11, "...look my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am a man of smooth skin." The Hebrew word for hairy also means a "he-goat" depicting the roughness of Esau's skin as opposed to Jacob who is described as smooth. The *tautua* is deemed rough skinned because of all the services and labour he provides for the family, whereas the *feagaiga* are mostly smooth skinned as their services evolve around the house.

So strictly⁷² from a Samoan perspective, to overlook the *tautua* in favour of the *feagaiga* is unheard of. However, this is how the story pans out from a *tautua* reading, i.e. the *feagaiga* has taken the *pule* from the *tautua*. In this light, I add my small contribution to the Esau debate; he was the *tautua* whom missed out unjustly.

5.1. Where is God? Whose God?

So where is God in the midst of the injustice and family affairs? I want to make two theological observations. First, according to House, the patriarchal narratives' central theme is God's providence of continuity despite the shortfalls of the patriarchal

⁷⁰ According to Pratt, the word *feagaiga* refers to an established relationship between different parties such as those between brothers and sisters and their children, and between chiefs and *tulafale* 'orators'. While *feagaiga* literally refers to covenant, its use within the context of a Samoan household is normally reserved to address the sister. A brother's obligations are based on the Samoan belief that the sister as *feagaiga* is a *tamasā* or 'sacred offspring'. In ancient Samoan theology, sisters were regarded as vessels of divinity with powers to attract the supernatural. The brother therefore is required to serve and care for his sister as long as he lives. Pratt, "Feagaiga" in *Pratt's Grammar and Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan*, p.419.

⁷¹ Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan Postcolonial Reading of Discipleship in the Matthean Gospel." p. 53.

⁷² I use this term here to refer to the Samoan household at its most basic form. The fact that even the sisters now hold family titles today in the modern Samoa is a discussion for some other time. But here I try to remain as simple in order to make a point.

characters.⁷³ God has always controlled the situation and ensured the continuation of the blessing from patriarch to son. Although God appears to be absent in our chosen text, God's influence may be seen earlier with the words to Rebekah in Gen 25:23 where the elder will serve the younger.⁷⁴ This goes to show that this is all part of God's plan, the plan that Esau missed out and Jacob suddenly became the blessed. The question for us is, can Esau and those who relate to Esau's situation rely on this God of continuity?

Second, although Esau misses out on the double portioned blessing, Isaac does offer him something. If we go back to Yahweh's words to Rebekah, both boys will father nations. Although Esau missed the main blessing, he is still blessed with a nation of children. Sometimes it may seem that God shows favour to one more than the other, but we must be assured that there is still hope for the less fortunate.

5.2. Application and Implications of Study

The first thing regarding the *tautua* is the requirement of commitment and service to the *pule* and family. We note that Esau had probably lost his inheritance of firstborn due to his failure to meet the standards required of him. In the text, we are only told that it is his marriage to the Hittite women which may have been the unforgivable sin in the eyes of Isaac. But this just goes to show that the decision is also in the hands of the *pule*. This authority and leadership role shall be discussed next. But for now, the *tautua* needs to remember that the *pule* is the one that seals his fate. SO why do we *tautua*? We may say it is the fulfilment of our roles in the family, however, the greatest motivation is the day when the *tautua* will one day become the *pule*. It is what people strive for. We see this struggle between Jacob and Esau and how it resulted in ill feeling and bad

⁷³ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 76-77.

⁷⁴ Antwi, "Younger-brother motif in Genesis as an object of Love and Hatred in the Family: Tensions, Conflicts and Reflection for the Contemporary African Family," p. 21.

intentions. Esau did not take lightly his missed blessing, it is the same with any *tautua* who does not become the *pule*. In this world, we all provide services in our work places and in life, you provide the best service with the hope, one day you will be promoted. Why is the higher role and responsibility tempting?

The *pule* is at the top of the family hierarchy, and others for that matter, whether it be political, or religious hierarchy. He makes most of the decisions and directs the family around for their well-being. However, we also know that such elevated positions are also position of prestige and receive the best of what is given. This material element of the *pule* is probably the greatest motivation for struggles to achieve it. Two major things can be said about the *pule*, first is that it is usually more desirable than the *tautua* role in terms of wealth and goods. The second is the fact that they have the authority to make decisions.

From a socio-political perspective, this reality of the *pule* whether it be in the Samoan social context under the family and matai system, secular, political and even the religious context of the church, it all remains the same. We see *tautua* struggle everywhere because of the strive to become the *pule*. An example from an EFKS member's perspective, these struggles are becoming quite obvious because of the aim of a minister to become the elder minister. Just like Jacob and Esau, hatred and ill-feeling is obvious between the clergy. Whilst some maybe classed with Esau who I believe deserves the *pule*, there are others who are like Jacob who 'jump the queue' and attempt to steal the blessing reserved for the *tautua*. Is this a *tautua* which can be classified as committed to service?

There is also a challenge for those who have become the *pule*, for the benefit of the family and the church, the *pule* must put aside all personal agendas and interests, make decisions which will best serve the interests of the family and the church.

Unfortunately, the *pule* is normally thinking of oneself before any other person. As soon as this happens, then such concepts such as bribery, corruption and injustice become the common language that rule such leaders.

Finally, we see that God never runs out of blessings and gifts for man. God will always bless us regardless of what situation we are currently in. God's providence should not be questioned. Esau might have missed out on his double portioned blessing, but it didn't mean it was the end of Esau and his world. He was blessed and fathered the nation of Edom. There are times when we question our blessings and think we are not blessed; we forget the countless blessings through God's providence; the simple things we take for granted such as life, family, breathing and the list goes on. We must learn and practice to accept these countless blessings in life that we have received.

For my family and I, the way forward according to this study is the cherishing of life and any blessing that God has reserved for us. Our father might have missed out on the role of *pule*, but we can be comforted by the fact that God has a blessing reserved for all. Furthermore, we should not dwell on situations we can no longer control. The fact remains; our family has a new *pule*, and to dwell on ill feeling and hatred will only affect our duties of being *tautua*. Furthermore, it will distract us from living our lives as God has reserved for us. That alone is a blessing.

Glossary

<i>aiga</i>	-	family
<i>FaaSamoa</i>	-	Samoan way of life
<i>feagaiga</i>	-	covenant
<i>pa'ō</i>	-	sound
<i>pule</i>	-	leadership, authority
<i>tautua 'aitaumalele</i>	-	distance services
<i>tautua matalilo</i>	-	service done behind the scene
<i>tautua matavela</i>	-	face that is always exposed to open fires
<i>tautua nofotuāvae</i>	-	to it behind or at the feet of someone.
<i>tautua pa'ō</i>	-	service filled with complaints and murmur
<i>tautua tausi-va</i>	-	respecting the space
<i>tautua toto</i>	-	service includes bloodshed
<i>tautua</i>	-	one who serves, service
<i>tuafafine</i>	-	sister
<i>va</i>	-	space

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