

**JACOB AND ESAU**

Old Testament Lesson #17

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. For 20 years they had no children. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, and God blessed them. Rebekah became pregnant.

The babies began to move a great deal within her womb. She asked God what was happening, and God informed her that she was going to have twins. The two babies represented two different nations that would be separated. God told her that one people would be stronger than the other, and the older would serve the younger.

When the twin boys were born, Isaac and Rebekah named the firstborn Esau. His brother, who was born holding onto Esau's heel, was named Jacob.

The boys were very different. Esau became a skillful hunter and a man of the open country, while Jacob was quieter and stayed near the tents. Isaac preferred Esau because he liked the taste of wild game. Rebekah loved Jacob.

Some time later, Esau was returning from the country and was extremely hungry. Jacob was cooking some stew, and Esau told Jacob to quickly give him some because he was famished. Jacob said that Esau first had to sell him his birthright. Since Esau thought he was near death, he said, "What good is the birthright to me?" Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a plate of food, swearing an oath to him. In this way, Esau despised his birthright.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

- "Jacob" means "heel catcher" or "supplanter" (that is, one who usurps the place of another).
- Esau's willingness to sell his birthright was very shortsighted. The birthright usually fell to the firstborn son and secured for him a double portion of the inheritance from his father, as well as leadership of the clan and the father's blessing. This blessing was considered to confer actual well-being and benefit on the recipient. In the case of Esau, he would have received the blessings God had promised to Abraham and Isaac.

**Jacob and Esau**

- I. God blessed Isaac and Rebekah with twin sons.
  - A. God said the babies represented two different nations that would be separated.
  - B. The older boy was named Esau.
  - C. The younger was named Jacob.
- II. Esau didn't value his birthright.
  - A. After a trip in the country, Esau was very hungry and wanted some stew that Jacob made.
  - B. Jacob said he first wanted Esau's birthright.
  - C. Esau thought he might die and the birthright would be useless.
  - D. He exchanged it for a plate of food.

**ANSWER KEY:**

Rebekah was going to give birth to twins.

oldest, Edom, red, hunter, sold, birthright, plate, stew, father's, son, Esau

second, hand, heel, quiet, bought, birthright, food, mother's, son, Jacob