

JACOB, FOLLOWING IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

By Keith Greer

"And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Genesis 25:28) When Isaac was sixty years old, he and Rebekah had two sons, Jacob and Esau. At the birth of these two, the Lord spoke to Rebekah saying, "And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger. " (Genesis 25:23) Esau was the elder, Jacob the younger. This situation brought each parent to take sides with their children. Rebekah would help Jacob trick Isaac into giving him the blessings of the firstborn. Sadly, this caused Jacob to be sent away from his family and his brother for many years. Did the parents forget what God told them and still believed that God needed their special help?

Jacob became the father of twelve sons and one daughter. Eventually they became known as the twelve tribes of Israel. **But what of Jacob's relationship with his son Joseph?**

"Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a tunic of many colors." (Genesis 37:3) Now on the surface it may not seem important that a father loves one of his children more than another, yet Jacob did, and it would eventually cause a troubling situation.

"But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him." (Genesis 37:4) The ill feelings manifested towards Joseph, and would later lead his brothers to sell him into slavery. (Genesis 37:28) The brothers added to their injustice by telling their father that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. (Genesis 37:29-35) For many years Jacob wept over the demise of his young son, but years later the two were reunited in Egypt. (Genesis 46:28-34) Consider all those years he was in mourning believing his son was dead. Where was the remorse of the brothers for selling their brother into slavery and then deceiving their father for all those years?

Why did Jacob allow himself to openly display himself to favor Joseph over his other sons? Jacob was following the example of his own father Isaac, in regard to he and his brother Esau. When we are blessed with children, sons or daughters, how are we to treat them?

As parents, we must remember that each one of our children are unique and different. Some children learn faster than others, some a little slower, and others may get better grades, yet in one way they are all alike. Children need to be loved and respected for being what they are, not made to feel like they are in competition with their brothers and sisters for our affection and admiration!

God instructs us to love our children, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord". (Ephesians 6:4) "That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children." (Titus 2:4)

Parents have an awesome duty toward their children. We must not only teach and instruct them in the ways of God – we must teach them many lessons of life along the way. One of the

things most parents tend to forget—children learn more by what they see than what they hear. Parents that treat children with partiality will probably see that rear itself to problems within the family among the siblings. Unfortunately, it will raise its ugly head again in the lives of our grandchildren!

We need to remember that our children will someday have children of their own and the way we treat them will affect the way they treat theirs! God wrote these stories of old so we might learn some valuable lessons and save us some heartaches along the way, Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11. Let us learn from the story of Jacob, and not repeat the errors of old!! Love all your children and love them for what each of them are—don't put them into competition with one another for your affections! ***