

# PARENTS' FAVORITISM FOR ONE OF THEIR CHILDREN

## GOLDEN TEXT

"Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Genesis 25:28)

## USEFUL PRACTICE

Favoring children within the home causes division and encourages selfishness in their upbringing.

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Genesis 25:19-28 / NIV**

19 -This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac,

20 - and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

21- Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.

22 -The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

23 - The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

24- When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.

25 - The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.

26 - After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

27 - The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents.

28 - Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

## **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

**I) To present** God's plan for Isaac and Rebekah's family;

**II) To point out** favoritism for children as one of the main causes of conflicts in the family;

**III) To explain** the harmful effects of favoritism on the upbringing and the physical, emotional and spiritual development of children.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The story of Isaac and Rebekah seems to be a sad repetition of that of Abraham and Sarah. Sometimes, Abraham did not know how to deal with his wife's feelings, making mistakes for which he paid a high price. In this lesson, we will learn about the couple Isaac and Rebekah's favoritism for their children. We will see that when this happens in the family, it causes endless conflicts that make the home a hostile environment for raising children. Obviously, this is not God's will for the Christian family.

### **I - GOD'S PLAN FOR THE FAMILY AND HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE**

#### **1. God's plan for Isaac and Rebekah's family.**

Isaac and Rebekah were part of God's larger plan. Upon meeting Rebekah and taking her as his wife, Isaac did not predict what would come next.

When he discovers Rebekah's barrenness, the Bible says that the patriarch prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless (Gen. 25:21). Only 20 years after that prayer, at the age of 60, Isaac received the news that Rebekah was pregnant (Gen. 25:26; 25:20). Therefore, nothing can stop God's plan, because when He works, His designs are fulfilled at the right time. So, in God's perfect timing, Rebekah bore twin boys.

## **2. The prescient purpose of God.**

God foreknew the future of Esau and Jacob. He knew beforehand what would happen to the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25:23). It did not depend on the circumstances surrounding this story. Therefore, the Lord answered Isaac's prayer and Rebekah conceived twin sons (Gen. 25:21). However, as the children developed, a few months later, the twins were already fighting each other in the womb of Isaac's wife (Gen. 25:22). In the case of the twins Esau and Jacob God knew that, created as free agents, they would be rivals. Here, we are addressing God's prescience, a divine attribute that indicates foreknowledge of all things. We must emphasize that this attribute is not causal, that is, it does not imply determinism in human life. However, the Lord has a purpose for every person's life; we do not often understand it, but we know that His will is perfect (Rom. 12:2).

## **II – CONFLICT IN THE FAMILY**

### **1. Rebekah's barrenness.**

In ancient times, a barren woman was viewed as a cursed person. Because they were unable to procreate, infertile women were considered to be so inferior that, in marriage, husbands had the right to repudiate them. In the case of Isaac, upon realizing that Rebekah could not bear him children, he prayed to the Lord that Rebekah's sterility would be undone and that she could conceive. As we have seen, God heard Isaac's cry (Gen. 25:21).

**2. Conflict:** “The babies jostled each other within her” (Gen. 25:22). At that time, from a social point of view, bearing inheriting children was important for families (Ps. 127:3-5). Therefore, Abraham and Sarah rushed God's promise with a substitute, Hagar the slave, to bear the desired child, and they paid a high price. Unlike his father, Isaac sought help from on high to overcome Rebekah's barrenness problem. However, once pregnant, to the couple's happiness, Rebekah began to worry about excessive movement inside her womb. Isaac's wife prayed to the Lord about the matter and heard from God that two nations were in her womb, and that the older would serve the younger (Gen. 25:23).

### **3. The couple's favoritism for their children.**

In terms of personality and temperament, Esau and Jacob grew up as different people. In Genesis 25:25-28, God reveals to Rebekah the differences between the twins. The “younger” (Jacob) would have a strong offspring and the “older” (the eldest and, therefore, the firstborn, Esau) will serve the younger. In chapter 27, old and blind, Isaac thought he would soon die. Therefore, he was concerned with blessing Esau with the patriarchal "birthright" blessing. Based on the legal standards of the law of that time, he dedicated himself to Esau, because he satisfied him with the pleasure of the wild game that he brought to the patriarch. However, knowing that there was a special plan from God for the younger son, Rebekah favored Jacob. This favoritism shown by the parents of Esau and Jacob would spark a great conflict in the family.

### **III - THE PROBLEM WITH FAVORING CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY**

#### **1. Esau, Isaac's favorite son.**

Isaac showed weakness in getting the pleasure from Esau, who brought him game meat from the field, thus ignoring the divine prophecy of Genesis 25:23. By virtue of the social standards of the time, the firstborn took precedence over the future of the family (Gen. 49:3; cf. Ps. 78:51). Therefore, Isaac thought that he should administer the birthright patriarchal blessing to Esau, the older son. However, he did not understand God's purpose for his children. Isaac did not realize that there was something superior about the two sons and that the Lord would act in such a way that neither of the two sons would be at a disadvantage.

#### **2. Jacob, Rebekah's favorite son.**

Realizing that the patriarchal blessing could be conferred on Esau, the older son, Rebekah decided to interfere in the order of events and, without consulting God, rushed the patriarchal blessing for the younger one. Although she knew that the blessing belonged to Jacob, as God had previously revealed, Rebekah placed herself above the divine plan and interfered in events with a lying attitude.

Aware that Esau had broken principles of obedience and respect for his parents by marrying a foreign woman (Gen. 26:34, 35), Rebekah devised a plan for Isaac to bless Jacob with the birthright blessing. So she gave Jacob precise instructions.

Rebekah's plan was to cook some goat meat, take some hairy goatskin, and put it on Jacob. He should take the cooked meat to his father and imitate his brother's voice. All this scheming revealed the weakness of Rebekah's character.

### **3. The problem with favoritism for children.**

In addition to the knowledge that the parents had about the conflict between the two sons, Isaac, as the leader of the family, lacked the skill and wisdom to get around the existing conflict. On the other hand, Rebekah did not assess the moral and spiritual damage to her children. The present biblical account teaches us that it is a moral and spiritual tragedy when parents favor one of their children.

These are a heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127:3) and God has granted this privilege so that parents can be a blessing in the lives of their children. Therefore, when parents do not favor their children, they avoid a future of trauma and emotional problems. In this sense, parents are responsible for the healthy and balanced development of their children from a physical, emotional and spiritual point of view (Eph. 6:4).

### **CONCLUSION**

In the Word of God, we find norms that serve as a healthy and Christian coexistence for family life. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul admonishes parents regarding raising children (Eph. 6:1-4). In this instruction, children must obey them (Eph. 6:-3) and parents must not exasperate their children (Eph. 6:4). Thus, when the couple does not respect the personality of their children, treating them with favoritism, the result, unfortunately, is conflict among family members.