

## **The Sin Of The Patriarch Jacob**

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Jacob and Esau were nonidentical twins in body and in calling. The Bible states that God loved Jacob (Romans 9:13). The Bible also declares that God hated Jacob's brother, Esau (Malachi 1:2-3). Before the twins were born, Jacob was chosen to lead God's people (Genesis 25:23). Esau's destiny (Genesis 25:26) was to be tripped up by the shrewd heel grabber, Jacob. The Bible explicitly declares that foolish "Esau despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:34). Early Christians were warned to beware of Esau's defiling bitterness (Genesis 27:34; Hebrews 12:14ff).

Yet, too often Jacob is seen today as defrauding Esau in his purchase of the birthright. Further, Jacob, is stigmatized as a "deceiver" for his role in Rebekah's successful ruse to shock Isaac out of his sinful determination to bless evil Esau contrary to God's expressed decree (Genesis 25:23; 27:32-28:5). But, sympathy for Esau is a smokescreen that obscures the actual, besetting sin of our father Jacob as revealed in Genesis. "And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren" (Genesis 29:31).

Jacob had been blinded by romantic love and agreed to work for Laban to marry his younger daughter, Rachel. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Genesis 29:20). Laban, then tricked Jacob into marrying Leah (Genesis 29:21-25) whom God had decreed to be mother of Judah, of David and ultimately of our Lord Jesus. Sadly, Jacob persisted in his quest for Rachel and became a polygamist at the cost of another seven years of service. The competition between Leah and Rachel brought Jacob two more wives, twelve sons, and a daughter (Genesis 29:26-30:25). The jealousy and hatred this struggle engendered almost destroyed Israel.

Aggrieved sons of Leah led their loyal servants in the massacre of Shechem to avenge their sister Dinah's honour (Genesis 34:1-31). After Rachel's death, Leah's son, Reuben, seduced Bilhah who was handmaid to hated Rachel and a concubine of Jacob (Genesis 35:22). When Jacob's sons rose up in envy against Joseph, the son of Rachel, Leah's son, Judah, made a deal to sell his weeping stepbrother into slavery for "twenty pieces of silver" (Genesis 37:26-28; 42:21). But, God raised Joseph up from slavery in Egypt. As Egypt's prime minister, Joseph saved Israel from famine and defused their fratricidal jealousy prompted by Jacob's stubborn, sinful preference for Rachel and her sons (Genesis 45:9-11,24).

Thus, when his brothers came to buy food, Joseph concealed his identity and charged them with being spies (Genesis 42:9f). His elaborate charade was a judicial ruse like that of the prophet Nathan (II Samuel 12:1-13). It was designed to secure justice through confession and repentance of sin. His brothers' confession of sin at Simeon's arrest evoked concealed weeping from incognito Joseph (Genesis 42:21-24). The demand for Benjamin to come to Egypt was actually a call for Jacob to repent of his besetting sin. Jacob finally repented in the face of dwindling supplies of grain (Genesis 42:36-38; 43:8-14). When his brothers refused to leave Benjamin in Egypt, Joseph ended his ruse amidst much weeping (Genesis 45:1ff).