

Purpose

- To learn about Isaac and Ishmel
- To learn about Esau and Jacob

Materials**Background Information**

ISAAC

Isaac is described as Abraham's son who inherited God's blessing. Of all the great fathers, we know the least about Isaac. Abraham's servant, Eliezer was sent to Nabor to find a wife for Isaac. – Genesis 24. (Eliezer at one time was Abraham's heir, but after the birth of Isaac was born Eliezer still had control of Abraham's possessions.) Abraham felt it was important that Isaac's wife not be from Canaan. Eliezer found Rebecca at the well filling her pitcher. Rebecca was the daughter of Bethuel. Eliezer went home with Rebecca and they fed him. It was very common for a marriage to be arranged, but usually the bride-to-be was asked her opinion. Rebecca followed Eliezer back to Canaan and became Isaac's wife. At this time Isaac was 40 year old.

About this time Abraham married Keturah one of his concubines. Keturah had several children, but when Abraham died at 175 years he left all he had to Isaac. Isaac and Ishmael took Abraham's body back Machpelah to be buried.

By this time Isaac and Rebecca were married but not able to have children. Isaac pleaded with God to give him children and Rebecca had twin sons when Isaac was 60. In those days it was considered to be something very special. It was destined for these two brothers to constantly struggle with each other. It is reported that they struggled even before they were born. They fought while they were in Rebecca and caused her to have a very hard pregnancy. The first-born was Esau and the second Jacob. Esau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field with hair all over his body. He had a generous spirit and was very much like his father, Isaac. Jacob was a mild man, but was very strong-willed and wanted to take short cuts to get what he wanted. As the two boys grew up, Esau became Isaac's favorite, and Jacob became Rebecca's favorite. Jacob deceived his father (with Rebecca's help) and received Isaac's blessing. This gave him the right of ownership over all the family's possessions. Poor Isaac never seemed to be in charge of anything. He was always overshadowed by his father (Abraham), his clever son (Jacob), or his controlling wife (Rebecca). But twice God reaffirmed to Isaac the promises he had made to Abraham. Isaac was an important link in God's plan for his people.

ESAU AND JACOB

One particular incident brings out the character of each boy. As Isaac grew old his eyesight became impaired. One day Isaac called Esau to him to give him his blessing. (The blessing plus the birthright entitled him to the first share in his father's property) Isaac instructed Esau to make his favorite stew from meat he had killed himself. Isaac would give him the blessing when he received the stew. Rebecca heard Isaac and Esau so she told Jacob to bring two goats so she could prepare the stew. Rebecca put the skin of the goats over Jacob's arms and Esau's clothing on him. When Jacob gave the stew to his father he claimed to be Esau so Isaac gave him the blessing. At that point Esau came in with the stew and discovered that Jacob had already received the blessing. Isaac was unable to withdraw the blessing. Isaac tried to get another blessing for Esau, but it turned out to be a curse. Esau had to work hard for his livelihood and do it in a part of the country that was less productive. At this point Esau started plotting to dispose of Jacob. In order to give Isaac and Esau time to calm down Rebecca sends Jacob away to Mesopotamia to stay with her brother.

JACOB

While Jacob is on his way to Mesopotamia he settled down to rest for the night. During his sleep that night he has a dream. In this dream he sees a ladder going from earth to heaven. Angels are going up and coming down. This appeared to be a connecting point between earth and heaven, and Jacob just accidentally settled there to sleep. In his dream the main promise that he receives is that this will become his land and he will share it with his descendants. The dream also promises Jacob will some day come back to his family and he will prosper very well. Jacob commemorates this dream by making an altar of stone right on that very spot.

When Jacob arrives at the well near Haran he joins shepherds who have gathered to water their sheep. Here Jacob first sees Rachel and becomes very interested in her. Jacob goes to see Laban, her father, and agrees to work for Laban for seven years with no pay if he will allow Jacob to marry Rachel. Now Rachel is the younger sister to Leah, also very beautiful. It is Jewish law that the oldest sister must marry first, but Laban agrees to the arrangement. At the end of seven years as they prepare for the wedding Laban tricks Jacob by substituting Leah (at the last minute) for Rachel. When Jacob realized that Laban had tricked him he must have been very upset. Jacob had to work another seven years to get Rachel as his wife also. Now poor Jacob has two wives (Rachel and Leah). The struggle between Rachel and Leah went on for years. Remember it was common for wives to give servant girls to their husbands to have children. Leah had a large family of six sons and 1 daughter. Rachel finally had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Servant girls had a total of four sons. That gives Jacob a total of 12 sons and several daughters. Because of his deceitful nature God changed his name from Jacob (deceiver) to Israel (he who struggles with God).

In time Jacob's sons became the heads of 12 extended families or clans. These clans of Jacob became the 12 tribes of Israel that Jesus talks about.

Many years later Jacob and Esau do meet each other and embrace each other and give each other gifts. They reconcile and become brothers again.

Procedure

- Checkout Lesson 5-1. Put in folder for reference.
- Give handouts 5-2, 5-3, 5-4 to be done for fun.