

Rebekah's Favoritism

Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. - Genesis 25:28 HCSB

Like many marriages, Rebekah and Isaac's started out idyllically¹ but soon degenerated into a mutually apathetic relationship. It diverged even further into reciprocal frustration and antagonism. What started out as a story book marriage ended up as a text book case of favoritism run amuck.

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah, old enough to be set in his ways and to be condescending to a young (possibly teenaged) bride. Twenty years passed by and Rebekah had difficulty conceiving. When she finally got pregnant, her pregnancy was so rough that she cried out, "Why is this happening to me?"²

The Lord answered her directly, and told her that she was having twins. He further informed her that her younger son would end up ruling over the older one. Perhaps this oracle was the seed of the later favoritism. Perhaps she ascribed her later reprehensible behavior to this spiritual root; we don't know for sure.

What we do know is that Isaac loved Esau selfishly. He loved Esau for what Esau could do for him. So between Isaac's selfish mindset, and Rebekah's preconceived notion of future greatness for Jacob, the stage for a tragic drama was set.

Their marriage became a joke - a sham. They were faithful to each other but it takes more than simply staying together to be truly "faithful." Successful marriages are characterized by teamwork, mutual sympathies, convictions and goals.

Of the two parents, Rebekah's favoritism became far more aggressive. In fact, she began to be so actively jealous for Jacob that she ceased to be jealous for her husband. She elevated her son's needs over her spouse's. Her love became so twisted that in an effort to gain Jacob a position of spiritual leadership she directed her son to deceive his father and was even willing to defy God's curse saying "Your curse be on me, my son. Just obey me..."³ Talk about love gone berserk! That kind of "love" will result in split families, broken homes and ruined lives.

Love that does not conform to God's word is not true love.⁴ True love is not blind. It recognizes and struggles against the sin and character flaws in those we love.⁵ True love is sacrificial and considers the long term needs of the object of affection.⁶

God does not play favorites⁷ with His children and there is no room for partiality in His house.⁸ There is no excuse for discrimination in our lives. There must be no cliques, cabals, in-crowds or fraternities in the church. We do not break the rules for someone because they are family, because they are popular or because we simply like them better. We must love; but we must truly love as God does and not play favorites.

¹ Genesis 24:15-16

² Genesis 25:22

³ Genesis 27:13

⁴ John 14:15, 21; 15:10-12; 1 John 5:2; 2 John 1:6

⁵ Romans 12:9

⁶ Ephesians 5:22, 25, 28; Philippians 2:3-8

⁷ Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Job 34:19; Matthew 22:16; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9; 1 Peter 1:17

⁸ Deuteronomy 16:19; Psalm 82:2; Colossians 3:11, 25; James 2:1, 9