

# WHY DID GOD LOVE JACOB AND HATE ESAU?

THAT it is impossible to alter the purpose of the Almighty God is abundantly shown in the allegory of Jacob and Esau. While they were still in their mother's womb, God indicated that they were, by nature, opposites; but He expressed love for one and hatred for the other.

Many scholars have run into difficulties in their efforts to understand why the Omniscient declared hatred for Esau right from the womb when he had done no evil. Certain critics and agnostics do not see any justification in God's attitude of love for Jacob and hate towards Esau. But they fail to take into consideration the fact that spiritual matters cannot be judged and concluded literally and that God is all wise and is the very embodiment of holiness.

We must admit that this matter is highly spiritual, and so any approach to it on the basis of worldly or carnal considerations is sure to lead to a wrong conclusion.

## Twin Sons

Jacob and Esau were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac, the son of Abraham, was forty years old when he got married. There was every indication that his marriage was of God. But his wife, Rebekah, was barren. Because of this Isaac intreated the Lord for her, and consequently she became pregnant. It is worthy of note that during her conception, she experienced unusual sensations in her womb. She was so much worried that she sought information from God about her state. The Bible states that as a result of Rebekah's inquiry, God revealed to her that there were twins in her womb. As it is written: "And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."- Genesis 25: 21-23.

At the time of Rebekah's delivery, she gave birth to twins as was revealed to her. "And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them." – Genesis 25: 24-26.

The children grew and attained manhood. Jacob was gentle, mild and retiring, and he took to a shepherd's life, but Esau was a man of opposite dispositions and he "was a cunning hunter, a man of the field". Isaac loved Esau, and Jacob was Rebekah's favourite. One of the dramatic scenes in the lives of the twin sons was the occasion when Esau for a mess of pottage sold his birthright to Jacob. The story goes thus: "And Jacob sold pottage: and Esau came from the field,

and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.” – Genesis 25: 29-34.

Another stage in the story, which is of great significance, was that in which Jacob obtained the blessing that Isaac their father intended for Esau. When Isaac was well stricken in age and his eyes were dim, he called Esau his eldest son and said: “Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.” – Genesis 27: 1-4.

As God would have it, Rebekah heard what Isaac told Esau, and she disclosed it to Jacob. While Esau was still in the bush hunting, Rebekah implored Jacob to get two kids from their flock at once for her to prepare a palatable dish for him to take to their father so as to obtain the blessing instead of Esau.

Jacob was rather apprehensive that such an act, if known to their father, would lead to grave consequences. He said to his mother: “Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.” Rebekah further, demonstrated her love for Jacob in this, and she told him: “Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.” – Read Genesis 27: 6-13.

Without engaging his mother in unnecessary argument, Jacob submitted” to her wish. He went and brought the two kids to her, and Rebekah prepared a savoury food such as her husband loved. She took the desirable raiment of Esau which were with her in the house and dressed up Jacob in them. She covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of the kids. Then Jacob took the tasty meal and went to his father. He told his father that he was Esau and that he had done as he was bidden. He prayed his father to sit up and eat of his meat so that he might bless him.

#### Jacob’s Voice

Isaac was struck by the speed at which his son got the game and prepared the dish, and he asked: “How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?” Jacob answered: “Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.” Isaac was still betwixt and between in his opinion as to whether Esau was the very one talking to him. He further said to his son: “Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not.” So Jacob went near to his father who, after feeling him, said: “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of

Esau.” He was unable to recognise Jacob because his eyes were dim and Jacob’s hands were hairy like Esau’s hands. So Isaac ate the food and blessed Jacob. – Read Genesis 27: 14-29.

In his benediction, Isaac said to Jacob: “Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be everyone that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.” – Genesis 27: 28, 29.

No sooner had Isaac ended his blessing, and Jacob had scarcely gone out of his father’s presence, than Esau returned from the hunt. He also made a savoury meat which he brought to his father, saying, “Let my father arise, and eat of his son’s venison, that thy soul may bless me.” Isaac was shocked. “Who art thou?” he asked. Esau answered: “I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau.” With great trembling Isaac further said: “Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.” – Genesis 27: 30-33.

Esau burst into tears and pleaded with his father, “Bless me, even me also, O my father.” But Isaac disclosed to him that Jacob had taken away the blessing. And when Esau further inquired whether any blessing at all was not reserved for him, Isaac answered: “Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him...” Right from that time Esau hated Jacob and determined to kill him after the passing away of their father. – Genesis 27: 34-41.

### Significance

Taking a literal view of the whole story one may be inclined to sympathise with Esau, and find it difficult to absolve Jacob and Rebekah from guilt. But we must point out that this is one of those ancient incidents of a far-reaching significance in the Holy Bible concerning which human considerations must give way to divine judgment.

In his book, *Mothers in the Bible*, the Rev. Donald Davidson, B. D., B. Litt., Ph. D., castigated Rebekah for the role she played. Though he appreciated the fact that Rebekah was warned by God that she would have twin sons, and that the elder would serve the younger, it was his view that she “was much too managing a woman to leave the working out of this destiny to God. She had herself to have a hand in it, and as we learn, with disastrous results”. The reverend gentleman stated that “Rebekah betrayed a pitiful lack of trust in the power of God, when she thought it was needful to resort to lying and deception in order to secure the blessing for her beloved Jacob”. This view of Rev. Davidson is unspiritual since it does not conform to God’s ways and thoughts. – Isaiah. 40: 13, 14; 55: 8, 9; Romans 3: 3, 4.

The fact that God at no time showed displeasure in regard to the role of Rebekah and Jacob, is enough for everyone to hold his peace and not to judge the All-knowing, Righteous God or Rebekah on the basis of man’s imperfect way of reasoning. “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?” “THY RIGHTEOUSNESS ALSO, O GOD, IS VERY

HIGH, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto Thee!” (Romans 11: 33, 34; Psalm 71: 19.) In order to gain spiritual insight into the whole matter we must be guided by the principle of “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” as enjoined by St. Paul. – 1 Corinthians 2: 12-14.

From all indications it is clear that Esau was not a child of God but a vessel of unrighteousness that was used by the devil with a sinister motive aimed at subverting the purpose of God. The whole episode was typical of the long drawn-out controversy between righteousness, which Jacob represented, and unrighteousness symbolised by Esau.

Isaac’s wish to bestow on Esau the divine blessing and to declare him his heir was contrary to the purpose of God. The special blessing of God upon Abraham, which, literally, passed on to Isaac was to be extended also to the seed of Isaac. But God, knowing the end from the beginning, was quite aware that Esau was an instrument of confusion and was not the right person to inherit the blessing. That was why He paved the way for Jacob whose right it was to inherit the heirship.

The love of Isaac for Esau was not spiritual but carnal. He loved him because he ate of the meat provided by Esau being a hunter. But Rebekah was conscious of God’s revelation to her that the “elder shall serve the younger”. Viewed against a spiritual background, she must be commended for showing a good understanding when her husband would have acted improperly against the will of the Most High.

Had God ordained the blessing for Esau, by no means or standard of wits would Jacob have succeeded to snatch it away. In fact, God would have prevented Isaac from giving the blessing to Jacob-more so, when he had recognised the voice to be that of Jacob. And when Esau arrived and introduced himself, though Isaac trembled, he, instead of withdrawing the blessing or cursing Jacob, still confirmed the blessing on Jacob saying, “YEA, AND HE SHALL BE BLESSED.” (Genesis 27: 33) This was because the will of God is irresistible or unchangeable!

“For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back. – Isaiah. 14: 27; see also Psalm 33: 11 and Daniel 4: 34, 35.

In Esau were manifest the traits of an ungodly person. He was a glutton, and he had no integrity and that was why he for a mess of pottage parted with his birthright. So when he posed to be the firstborn before his father to get blessing after he had sold his birthright he was being dishonest. The Bible describes him as a profane person, and Christians are admonished not to be like him. Said St. Paul: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God...lest there be any fornicator, or PROFANE PERSON, AS ESAU, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” (Hebrews 12:15-17) Yes, integrity and spiritual mindedness are very important in the service of God. – Proverbs 11: 3; 20: 7; Romans 8: 6.

Under the divine arrangement Jacob, as stated earlier, was the heir through whom God's promise to Abraham was to be processed into materialisation. Esau's appearance on the scene was an intrusion. St. Paul, an accomplished apostle of Christ, pointed out in an inspirational discourse that it was not all who descended from Abraham were truly his children in that God in His promise specifically mentioned Sarah. He added: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? GOD FORBID." – Romans 9: 6-14.

Esau's hatred for Jacob which extended to their descendants-the Edomites and Israelites-was unjustified. And God said to Esau: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." – Obadiah verse 10.

It is clear from the foregoing that God hated Esau because he was an instrument the devil would use and did use for a sinister purpose; but He loved Jacob for he was His chosen one who was out for righteousness and who was ordained to inherit His blessing.