Child’s version of the Story of Jacob:

**JACOB AND ESAU**

Gen. 25:19-34

Abraham died when he was 175 years old. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the same cave of Machpelah that Abraham had purchased for the burial of Sarah, his wife (Gen. 25:7-10).

After Isaac and Rebekah had been married for some time, Isaac prayed to the Lord that he and Rebekah might have a child. The Lord answered his prayer and Rebekah conceived. Before she gave birth the Lord spoke to Rebekah and told her two nations were in her womb, one would be stronger than the other, and the elder would serve the younger. When the twins were born, the firstborn son was called Esau, and the second son was called Jacob.

The twin boys grew, and Esau became a hunter while Jacob was a mild man dwell- ing in tents. One day Esau came in from the fields hungry, and when he discovered Jacob cooking pottage (stew), he sold his birthright to his brother for the food.

The birthright was the special right by birth enjoyed by the firstborn son of the family. The firstborn son received a double portion of the inheritance of his father's possessions (Deut. 21:17). In addition the firstborn received a special blessing from the father, for after the father died, the firstborn became head of the family.

By selling his birthright for some food, Esau foolishly gave up his firstborn rights of inheritance–a sacred possession–for a temporary satisfaction of his appetite. Even more serious was the loss of his position as the one through whom the spiritual promise to Abraham would be fulfilled. The Hebrew writer calls Esau “profane,” for he disregarded something sacred, trading it for something common (Heb. 12:16-17).

Many years later these twins had families of their own. The descendants of Esau are called Edomites (Gen. 36:9). The word Edom means red. The descendants of Jacob are called Israelites or the children of Israel, for Jacob was given this new name Israel by an angel (Gen. 32:28).

**JACOB RECEIVES ISAAC'S BLESSING**

Gen. 27; 28:1-5

When Isaac was old and his eyes dim, he directed Esau, his elder son, to take his bow and quiver, go to the field and bring him some venison. He would then give Esau his blessing before he died. This special blessing was part of the birthright of the firstborn son. However, when Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob, he not only gave away his right to the double portion of inheritance, he also lost his right for this special blessing.

Rebekah overheard Isaac's instructions to Esau, and to ensure that her favorite son Jacob received the blessing, she and Jacob devised a scheme to deceive Isaac. Rebekah told Jacob to bring her two good kids from the flocks, and she would prepare for Isaac some food that he loved. After Jacob brought the kids to his mother, he dressed in Esau's clothes. To complete the deception, Rebekah then put the skins of the goats upon Jacob's hands and neck, for Esau was a hairy man.

Disguised in this manner, Jacob took the food his mother had prepared to his blind father. Then Isaac, deceived in this manner, gave Jacob the blessing he had intended to give to his favorite son Esau.

Later when Esau brought Isaac the venison and Jacob's deception became known, Esau begged his father for a blessing. Isaac could not take away the blessing he had given to Jacob, but he could give Esau a lesser blessing. Esau then resolved to kill his brother Jacob after their father died, but Rebekah heard about his plan. She persuaded Isaac to send Jacob away to her brother Laban in Haran that Jacob might take a wife from her brother's family.

Although Esau and Jacob eventually were reconciled, their conflict was carried on by their descendants after them. The Edomites (descendants of Esau) and Israelites (descendants of Jacob) feuded for centuries until the Edomites were finally subdued by the Maccabeans (descendants of Israel, Jacob) and became a part of the Jewish (Israelite) people in 126 B. C. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 by the Romans, the Edomites disappeared from history.

**JACOB'S DREAM**

Gen. 28:6-22

After Isaac blessed Jacob, he sent him away to Padan-aram to take a wife from Rebekah's family. As Jacob rested one night on the way, he lay down to sleep with his head against a stone. He dreamed and saw a ladder reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending. The Lord stood above the ladder and repeated to Jacob the promises given to Abraham and Isaac.

When Jacob awoke, he took the stone that he had put at his head and set it up for a pillar. He called the place Bethel which means *House of God.* He then made a vow that if the Lord was with him and allowed him to return to his father's house in peace, the Lord would be his God, the stone would be God's house, and he would give a tenth of all he had to the Lord.

***GOD'S THREE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC, JACOB***

***The Nation Promise***

***TO ABRAHAM:*** I will make of thee a great nation (Gen. 12:2)

***TO ISAAC:*** I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven (Gen. 26:4)

***TO JACOB:*** Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth (Gen. 28:14)

***The Land Promise***

***TO ABRAHAM:*** Unto thy seed will I give this land (Gen. 12:7)

***TO ISAAC:*** I will give unto thy seed all these countries (Gen. 26:4)

***TO JACOB:*** The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it (Gen. 28:13)

***The Spiritual Promise***

***TO ABRAHAM:*** In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:3) ***TO***

***ISAAC:*** In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen. 26:4) ***TO***

***JACOB:*** In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen 28:14)

***JACOB'S FAMILY.*** Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and thus there was envy be- tween the two sisters. While Rachel remained childless, Leah bore Jacob four sons. Rachel gave her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob as his wife in order to have children by her. Bilhah bore two sons to Jacob.

Leah then gave her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob as wife, and she, too, had two sons. Subsequently Leah bore Jacob two more sons and a daughter. Finally God remembered Rachel, and she conceived and had a son. Following the birth of her second son sometime later, Rachel died.

**JACOB MEETS ESAU**

Gen. 30:25-43; 31; 32; 33

After his eleventh son Joseph was born, Jacob asked Laban to allow him to return to his own country with his wives and children, for he had completed his fourteen years of service. But Laban stated he had been blessed by the Lord because of Jacob. He asked Jacob to remain and promised to pay him wages to care for his flocks.

Laban and Jacob then made an agreement. In order that he might begin to provide for his own household, all the colored, spotted, and speckled sheep and goats from the flocks would be given to Jacob for his wages. However, that day Laban re- moved all the animals marked in that manner, giving them into the care of his own sons who put three days journey between them and the remainder of the flocks. Nevertheless, through the years Jacob bred the animals that were left in his charge, producing strong, spotted, and colored animals for himself. God was with Jacob, and he prospered greatly acquiring large flocks and many servants (Gen. 30:25-43).

At the end of six years, the Lord told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, and He would be with him. Jacob gathered all his household and substance and left Ha- ran while Laban was away shearing sheep. Laban learned on the third day that Jacob was gone and pursued after him, overtaking him in seven days in the mountains of Gilead. God warned Laban in a dream not to interfere with Jacob nor harm him. The two men then made a peaceful agreement, setting up a heap of stones as a memorial, offering a sacrifice, and sharing a meal. The next day Laban returned to Haran, and Jacob continued his journey to Canaan, wondering now how to deal with his brother Esau (Gen. 31).

As Jacob went on his way, angels of God met him. Jacob then sent messengers to Esau informing him that he was returning. The messengers came back and re- ported that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Alarmed, Jacob divided his company into two groups so that if Esau should smite one group, the other might escape. He then prayed to God for deliverance (Gen. 32:1-12).

Jacob sent a large number of goats, sheep, camels, cattle, and donkeys to Esau as a gift in an attempt to appease him. Then as he approached a river, Jacob sent his family and substance to the other side at evening, but he remained behind. During the night he wrestled with an angel. At break of day Jacob insisted the angel bless him. The angel gave Jacob a new name–Israel–which means, *He strives with God, Let God rule,* or *God strives.* This name was later applied to the descendants of Jacob who were called Israelites or the children of Israel (Gen. 32:13-32).

At last after twenty years, Jacob's meeting with Esau took place. When Jacob saw Esau advancing with his four hundred men, he put the two handmaids and their children in the front of his company, Leah with her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went before them to greet Esau, bowing to the ground seven times. Esau ran to him and embraced him, and they wept together. After meeting Jacob's family, Esau declined to keep the gift of animals Jacob had sent him, but Jacob insisted he keep the gift because God had blessed him. The brothers then parted peacefully. Esau returned to the land of Seir, the area south of the Dead Sea, where he had settled, while Jacob continued on to Canaan (Gen. 33).