JACOB AND ESAU

Reader’s Theater
Adapted by Jodie Jones to use for Lesson 13, Primary Manual #6 from:
Scripture Story: Jacob and Esau,” Tambuli, Feb 1986, 4 found at www.lds.org

This story is found in Gen. 25; Gen. 27; Gen. 29–33; Gen. 35.

READERS:
Narrator 1
Isaac
Jacob
Laban

Narrator 2
Rebekah
Jacob
Esau

Suggested Props:
- Scarves or pieces of fabric for head dress
- Name plates to identify the players
- Soup bowl and ladle
- 2 Plates (1 for Jacob and 1 for Esau)
- Fabric to cover Jacob’s arms, such as flannel or faux fur.

Narrator 1: Isaac and Rebekah had been married for nearly twenty years, but they had no children. Isaac knew the Lord had promised that Abraham would have many descendants, so he prayed for the blessing of children. The Lord answered Isaac's plea.

When Rebekah was about to give birth, she felt a strange struggle within her, and she was worried. In answer to her prayer the Lord revealed to her that she would have twins and that each child would become the leader of a separate nation. One nation would be stronger than the other, and the older child would serve the younger.

Narrator 2: In time Rebekah gave birth to twin boys. The second boy was born holding onto his brother's heel. The two were very different. The firstborn, whom they named Esau, was reddish, and his body was covered with hair. The younger was smooth-skinned and was named Jacob. As the boys grew, Esau became a clever hunter, spending his days in the fields with his bow, while Jacob worked near the tents where they lived.

One day, while Jacob was cooking a pot of bean soup, Esau came in from hunting. He was weak with hunger, smelling the delicious food, he said to Jacob…

Esau: Feed me, I pray thee, with that same soup for I am faint.
Narrator 1: In those days, certain blessings and privileges, which were called the “birthright,” were passed down from father to oldest son. Esau, Isaac’s oldest son, was entitled to the birthright.

Jacob: Promise me your birthright;"

Esau: Behold, I am so hungry that I am almost dying. What good would this birthright do me if I were dead?

Narrator 2: Esau made the promise, trading his birthright for a bowl of soup. Caring more for food than for his birthright, Esau ate until he was filled and then went on his way.

Years passed and Isaac grew old. His health was poor, and his eyesight was almost gone. He knew he didn’t have much longer to live upon the earth.

As the senior member of his family, Isaac had the right to give the birthright and special blessings to his children. Isaac called his oldest son, Esau, to him and said…

Isaac: Behold now, I am old; I know not the day of my death. Now therefore, take thy quiver and thy bow, go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me good-tasting meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, so that I may eat, so that my soul may bless thee before I die.

Narrator 1: Rebekah overheard her husband speaking to Esau and ran to find Jacob. The Lord had revealed to Rebekah that Jacob was to receive the birthright, but Rebekah knew how much Isaac loved his oldest son and wanted to give these blessings to Esau. Because Esau had not always made right choices, Rebekah knew he was not worthy. He had rejected the teachings of his parents by marrying a daughter of the Canaanites. Rebekah knew by inspiration that Jacob should receive the birthright blessing.

Rebekah told Jacob that Isaac had sent Esau for venison and that he was going to bless Esau after the meal.

Rebekah: Now obey my voice. Go to the flock, and fetch me two young goats. I will make good-tasting meat for thy father just as he loves it."

Narrator 2: She then told Jacob he was to take the food to his father. Then Isaac would give Jacob the blessing instead of Esau.
Jacob: Behold, Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father will feel me and know that I have deceived him. It shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing.

Rebekah: Do not worry, but go and do as I have said.

Narrator 1: Jacob hurried out, and when he returned with the two small goats, his mother prepared the good-tasting meat. Rebekah took some of Esau’s clothes and put them on Jacob. She also took the skins of goats and made a hairy covering for his hands and neck. Placing the meat and bread which she had prepared into Jacob’s hands, she sent him to his father. Jacob nervously approached Isaac.

(Cover Jacob’s arms with fabric such as flannel or faux fur)

Jacob: My father

Isaac: Who art thou, my son?

Jacob: I am Esau, thy firstborn; I have done as thou did ask. Sit and eat of my venison that thou may bless me."

Isaac: Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. (Jacob steps closer and Isaac feels his arms).

The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

(Jacob serves the food)

Isaac: Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

Narrator 2: When Jacob knelt and kissed his father, Isaac smelled Esau’s clothing and felt satisfied that it was indeed Esau. Then laying his hands upon Jacob’s head, Isaac blessed him with the birthright, which Esau had traded for a bowl of soup. Isaac blessed Jacob with the good things of the earth and prophesied that his brother would bow down to him and serve him. The same blessing that had been Abraham’s and Isaac’s was given to Jacob. He was to inherit a promised land and have many descendants. Those descendants were to bear the holy priesthood and be a blessing to all nations of the earth.

Soon after Jacob had left the room, Esau returned. He had also prepared good-tasting meat for his father.

Esau: Let my father arise, and eat of his son’s venison, that thy soul may bless me.
Isaac  *(Confused. He cries out)*  Who art thou?

Esau: I am thy son, thy firstborn, Esau.

Isaac: Who? Where is he who brought venison to me? I have eaten before thou came and have blessed him.

Narrator 1: But Isaac recognized that it was the will of the Lord that Jacob should receive the birthright, so he said, “He shall be blessed.”

Esau wept. He had lost the blessings that could have been his because he had not lived to be worthy of them. He begged his father to give him but one blessing.

Isaac laid his hands upon Esau’s head and blessed him that he would live by the sword and would serve his brother.

Because of what had happened, Esau hated Jacob.

Esau: My father will soon die, and then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Narrator 2: Rebekah found out what Esau had threatened to do and called Jacob to her. She knew that the Lord had a special mission for Jacob, and she wanted to protect him so he could live to perform that mission. She found Jacob and said…

Rebekah: Behold thy brother Esau is planning to kill thee. Therefore, arise and flee to Laban my brother who lives in Haran. Stay with him until thy brother’s anger is turned away, and then I will send for thee.

Narrator 1: Following his mother’s advice, Jacob left his home. Before he left, Isaac instructed Jacob not to marry any of the daughters of Canaan, but to go to Laban’s home and seek a wife there.

Laban welcomed Jacob and took him to his home. He was pleased with his sister’s son.

And as the years past, he married Laban’s oldest daughter Leah, and then her younger sister Rachel.

After fourteen years of service to Laban, Jacob wanted to leave Laban and take his wives and his children to his homeland. Laban did not want him to go. The Lord had blessed Laban in many ways since Jacob had been with him. Laban pleaded with Jacob…

Laban: Stay with me and I will give thee thy desires.
Narrator 2: Jacob patiently served Laban six more years before he took his family and animals and returned to Canaan.

Jacob had been gone from Canaan, the land of his birth, for twenty years. When the Lord told him to return, he worried about how his brother, Esau, would accept him. Jacob had left his home because Esau wanted to kill him; and Jacob wondered if Esau still felt the same.

Narrator 2: When he and his family neared Esau’s land, Jacob sent messengers ahead to tell Esau that he was on his way home. The messengers returned bringing word that Esau was coming to meet Jacob with four hundred men.

Jacob was frightened. He divided the people, the flocks, and the herds into two groups. If Esau attacked one group, the other might be able to escape. Then Jacob turned to the Lord in prayer. Humbly he admitted that he was not worthy of God’s mercy, but he prayed that God would deliver him and his family from Esau.

Narrator 1: The next morning Jacob saw Esau and his four hundred men approaching. He went out before his family and bowed down to the ground seven times. Esau ran to meet Jacob. He embraced and kissed Jacob, and they both wept. Jacob had not expected this kind of reunion. Esau had forgiven Jacob and was happy that his twin brother had returned. Jacob’s wives and children came forward and bowed in greeting before Esau.

Jacob was greatly relieved that his brother had forgiven him. He was happy to be in his own country once more.

Narrator 2: Altogether, Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, had twelve sons. The family of each son was called a tribe, and they were known as the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The promises made by the Lord to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were passed down through those sons. Their descendants would bring the blessings of the gospel to many people throughout the world.

The Lord had blessed Jacob and had preserved him to become the father of a great nation, as had been revealed to his mother, Rebekah.