

# FABASA

***What you fail to do today is the footsteps your children will follow tomorrow***

*"The past empowers the present, and the sweeping footsteps leading to this present mark the pathways to the future."*

Mary Catherine Bateson

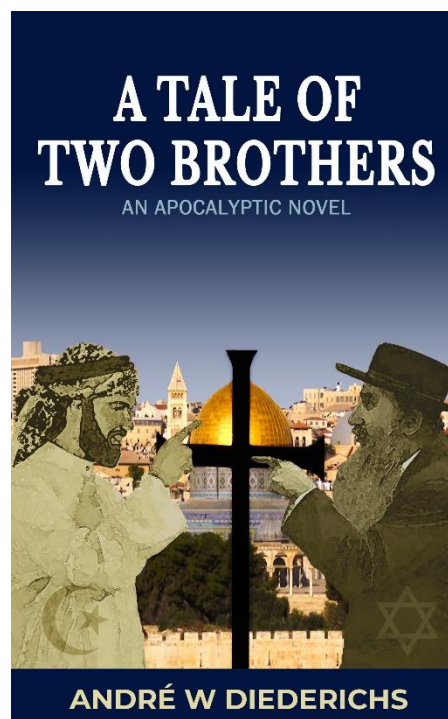
## What FOOTPRINTS do you leave behind?

André Diederichs: Chief convener: FABASA

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### A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

The war between Israel and the Palestinian terrorist movement Hamas has dominated the world news for some time now. People don't always realize that the struggle between Israel, also called Palestine, has existed for thousands of years. The origin of the conflict begins with two brothers, Ishmael and Isaac, and is continued to this day by their descendants. In *A Tale of Two Brothers*, the past, present and future of the conflict between the two brothers' descendants is described as a story.



### CONFLICT ESCALATES IN FAMILY BUSINESSES

I have assisted more than 400 family businesses over the years with their Constitutions and Succession Plans and increasingly participate in mediations due to conflict in family businesses. Sometimes the conflict is between the parents and the children but nowadays the conflict is increasingly among the brothers and sisters



## OLD SINS CAST LONG SHADOWS

**Conflict that is not addressed causes a vicious cycle that repeats itself from generation to generation. This has caused many a family business to break up if it is not addressed. The seeds that are placed in our hearts begin to germinate and determine our thinking and actions. This is why Solomon warns us, "Above all, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."**

I am currently writing my new Afrikaans book, VOETSPORE (FOOTPRINTS), which follows my previous book, LEGACY. In my new book old stories are resumed and new stories begin. The new stories expand on the conflict in the families I had to deal with. It has become increasingly clear to me that the persons that the children marry often contribute to strife between siblings. Disputes are also often the result of events from their childhood that spread like cancer.

Psychologists claim that sibling rivalry begins as soon as child number two is born. With that newborn baby's constant cry for attention, the tug-of-war between siblings to win the title of most beloved begins. I remember reading that St. Augustine wrote that he watched and studied a jealous baby. He could not yet speak and, pale with jealousy and bitterness, glared at his brother who was sharing his mother's milk.

This reminds me of the phone call I received from Totius Coetzee (fictitious name) from the Eastern Cape. Totius is the eldest of three brothers

who farm together. He and his middle brother, Hendrik (fictitious name), have been butting heads since childhood and he and the youngest brother have now also started butting heads. Totius was discouraged and wanted to hear from me if I had any advice. He then asked me: "Have you ever tried to make relationships a little better, but ended up only making the bad relationships worse?"

"Yes, it has happened to me too and I also know that it has happened to many other people because the Germans have developed a word for it."

"OK, what is the German word?"

"It is one of those long untranslatable German words. The word is verschlimmbesserung."

He then interrupted me: "What on earth does the word mean, I won't even be able to pronounce it."

"Don't worry, there's no need to remember the word. I am only telling you this to confirm that what you are experiencing is being experienced by many other people. The word contains two verbs in one word. It is composed of the verb verschlimmern, which means to worsen, and the verb verschlimmern, which means to improve. In short, it means that we can sometimes make things worse when we try to improve them."

## IMPORTANT OBSERVATION

One of the most important life lessons we have to learn is that all people do not deal with conflict, or when they get angry, in the same way. Some people

get annoyed quickly and react immediately and then the argument is over and they move on without thinking about it again. However, some people don't get angry quickly, but when they get angry, they don't forget quickly and it may take time before you can go on in peace again. The answer was simply to learn patience by not messing with them any further. Just like that German word teaches us that sometimes we can make things worse when we try to improve them. They will indicate themselves when they have processed the anger.

Some people cling to anger from childhood. Parents sometimes make the mistake of comparing high-achieving children to other children and may say that they wish one child was more like the other child or something similar. Parents can often refer to an event in a child's life in a mocking way and over time it becomes one of the family's jokes that is told over and over again. It is then often retold over time by the other children, even after the parents are no longer there.

However, what we don't always realize is that the child with whom this happened may very much like to forget the event and afterwards start to build up a permanent grudge against the family who keeps repeating it. Such children may begin to withdraw from the family to escape the constant humiliation.

We must not forget that even though children all come from the same household, they are still different. It is like an analogy about a potato family. Potatoes come from the soil

and share a similar origin story just like children from the same family. However, potatoes can be prepared in different ways, such as mashed potatoes, fried or boiled potatoes and so on. We also all like different spices which will also determine the taste of the potato. It is like parents who want to mould their children according to their tastes, or preferences. At the end of the day, we are all more salted or peppered according to all the influences on our lives over the years.

### WHAT ARE THE FOOTPRINTS YOU LEAVE BEHIND?

Years ago, I was asked to do a presentation on what a successful owner of a family business's balance sheet should look like upon his or her death. When I thought about the subject, I realised that success in our lives cannot only be about financial success. All too often I have had to observe how family businesses with good financial results go under as a result of poor relationships. I, therefore, refer to it as:

**THE BALANCE SHEET OF LIFE** in that success requires us to be fit on three dimensions, namely:

#### 1. Financial Fitness:

Stewardship implies that you deal responsibly with the financial assets of the family business and do not treat them as if they were your assets.

#### 2. Emotional Fitness:

Relationships work just like a bank account. You make deposits and withdrawals. If you withdraw more

from relationships than you deposit then those relationships will become unhealthy and vice versa. Respect is the glue that holds relationships together.

#### 3. Spiritual Fitness:

My research among the oldest family businesses in the world shows that good core values, which are instilled in children from generation to generation, are the main reason for their sustainability.

### FESTIVE SEASON

The upcoming festive period usually brings families together and is a good time to mend broken relationships. Just like the story of the carpenter who arrived at the farmer's farm to ask for work. The farmer and his brother farmed together for years in peace. His brother and he then got into an argument. They separated from each other and did not communicate at all. He then asked the carpenter to build an 8-foot wall between him and his brother so that he could not even see his brother's house on the other side of the creek.

However, when he returned from town to the farm, the carpenter built a bridge over the stream between him and his brother. He then saw his brother standing on the other side of the bridge with surprised eyes.

His brother then began to speak and said he could not believe that his brother had built a bridge between them after treating him so badly. The brothers then walked across the bridge

towards each other and embraced each other.

**May we all build bridges, rather than walls, over the festive season to mend broken relationships. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Mathew 5:9)**

Those of you who, like me, believe in the BIBLE should take note of the Scriptures in 1 John 4: 20 "If anyone says: I love God and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

**I like to say the Gaelic blessing over you:**

May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

### CONCLUSION:

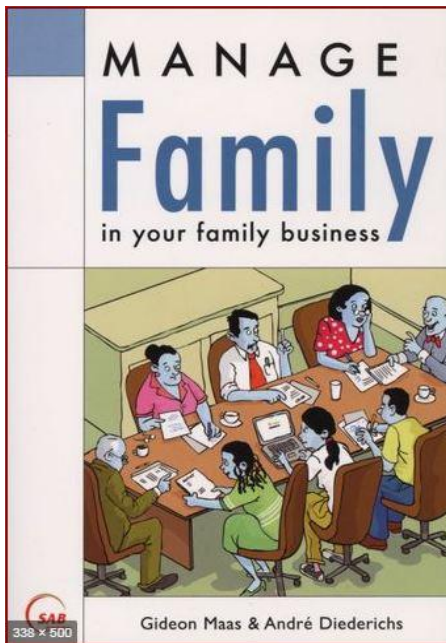
**The footprints we leave must not only take care of our descendants financially but also leave our footprints on their hearts because good values and family harmony are the most precious gifts we can ever leave.**

**REMEMBER: What you fail to do today is the footsteps your children will follow tomorrow**

**For help with MEDIATION to improve communication contact FABASA at:**

**[info@fabasa.co.za](mailto:info@fabasa.co.za)**

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