

תולדות
Toldot

Genesis 25:19-28:9
Haftarah Malachi 1:1-2:7
Shabbat, November 14, 2026
ד׳ בְּכִסְלֵו תשפ״ז

Contents		תוכן
Torah with selected Rashi	3	תורה
Haftarah with Rashi	29	הפטרה
Midrash	35	מדרש
Classical Commentaries	39	מפרשים
Chassidic Courts	46	חסידות
Modern Commentaries	53	בני זמננו
More this week	58	עוד

In This Issue

The overview and the section summaries in this booklet were written by AI from the texts printed here.



ראשון 3



שני 9



שלישי 11



רביעי 13



חמישי 15



שישי 21



שביעי 26



מפטיר 27



הפטרה 29

Toldot opens with the story of Yitzchak and Rivkah, who wait many years for a child and then carry twins who struggle within her. The reader will follow the brothers Esav and Yaakov from birth through the sale of the birthright and the stolen blessing, to Yaakov's departure for Haran. Along the way come Yitzchak's wells in Gerar and Be'er Sheva, and Yitzchak's own journeys through the land. The Torah portion is accompanied by Rashi's selected comments, and the Haftarah from Malachi speaks of G-d's love for Yaakov and of the covenant with Levi.

The midrash and the classical commentaries then take up the same story from many angles. Some sages read the struggle in Rivkah's womb as hostility, and others find in Esav's hunting a picture of a man who ensnares people with his words. Ramban reads the three wells as a sign of the three Temples, while Ibn Ezra, Sforno, and Radak offer differing accounts of Rivkah's cry and of the parents' love for their sons. Ramban also explains how Avraham could keep the whole Torah before it was given, and Rashbam offers a different view of the same three terms.

The chassidic and modern selections show how these verses can speak to a reader's own life. The Ohev Yisrael teaches that a person's prayer for relief should also aim at mending the Shechinah's lack, and the Sefat Emet explains that each generation must climb its own path. A modern essay on Yitzchak's resemblance to Avraham reflects on the uniqueness of every person, and it ends with a warning against treating human life as a commodity. Together these readings invite the reader to look closely at the family, and at what each person must build for himself.



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THE READING · GENESIS 25:19–26:5

ראשון
First Aliyah

Yitzchak, at forty, married Rivkah, who was barren; after he prayed, G-d answered and she conceived twins who struggled within her, and G-d told her that two nations would come from her and the elder would serve the younger. When Esav was born first and Yaakov followed holding his heel, Esav grew into a skilled hunter favored by Yitzchak, while Yaakov, a mild man who stayed in camp, was favored by Rivkah, and later Yaakov obtained Esav's birthright in exchange for stew when Esav came home famished and despised it. During a famine, G-d told Yitzchak not to go down to Egypt but to stay in the land, promising blessing and numerous descendants because Avraham had obeyed G-d's charge. AI SUMMARY

19 This is the story of Isaac, son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac.

יטוְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק׃

20 Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean.

כוַיְהִי יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקַחְתּוֹ אֶת־רִבְקָה בַּת־בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרַמִּי מִפַּדַּן אֲרָם אֲחוֹת לָבָן הָאֲרַמִּי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

19 **And this is the legacy,** the events in the life, **of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begot Isaac.** 20 **Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebecca, daughter of Betuel the Aramean, from Padan Aram,** who was the **sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.** Padan means field; there is a similar word in Arabic.

SELECTED RASHI

25:19 AND THESE ARE THE PROGENY OF ISAAC — viz, Jacob and Esau who are spoken of in this section.

25:19 ABRAHAM BEGAT ISAAC — Just because Scripture wrote, "Isaac, son of Abraham" it felt compelled to say "Abraham begat Isaac", because the cynics of that time said, "Sarah became with child of Abimelech. See how many years she lived with Abraham without becoming with child". What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He shaped Isaac's facial features exactly similar to those of Abraham's, so that everyone had to admit that Abraham begat Isaac. This is what is stated here: that Isaac was the son of Abraham, for there is evidence that Abraham begat Isaac (Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 1).

25:20 THE DAUGHTER OF BETHUEL THE SYRIAN OF PADAN-ARAM, THE SISTER TO LABAN —Has it not already been written that she was the daughter of Bethuel and sister of Laban of Padanaram? But we are told these facts once more to proclaim her praise — she was the daughter of a wicked man, sister of a wicked man, and her native place was one of wicked people, and yet she did not learn from their doings (Genesis Rabbah 63:4).

כאוַיֶּעְתַּר יִצְחָק לַיהוָה לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה
הִוא וַיֵּעָתֶר לוֹ יְהוָה וַתַּהַר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ׃

21 Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD responded to his plea, and his wife Rebekah conceived.

כבוַיִּתְרֹצְצוּ הַבָּנִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־כֵּן
לָמָּה זֶּה אָנֹכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ לִדְרֹשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה׃

22 But the children struggled in her womb, and she said, "If so, why do I exist?" She went to inquire of the LORD,

BERESHIT RABBAH 63:6 P. 37 Why did Rivkah's twins struggle within her womb?

RAMBAN & IBN EZRA P. 41 Why did Rivkah wish she had never been born?

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

21 **Isaac entreated** and prayed fervently to **the Lord on behalf of his wife** while standing opposite her, **because** he understood from the fact that she had not given birth in the many years since they were married (see verse 26) that **she was barren. The Lord acceded to his entreaty, and Rebecca his wife conceived.**

22 During her pregnancy **the children were agitated within her.** It will soon become clear that she was bearing fraternal twins. Sensing that something was abnormal and cause for concern, **she said: If so,** if the pregnancy is so difficult, **why am I like this,** why do I want it? Alternatively, this means: If my suffering is so great, what is the point of living? **And she went to inquire of the Lord.** At the time, there were distinguished individuals who accepted the faith of Abraham and his family, such as Malkitzedek king of Shalem (see 14:18–20). Rebecca sought prophetic instruction from such a man.

SELECTED RASHI

25:21 AND ISAAC ENTREATED —He prayed much and urgently.

25:21 WAS ENTREATED OF HIM — He let himself be urged, conciliated and influenced by him. I say that wherever this root עתר occurs it has the meaning of heaping up and increasing. E. g., (Ezekiel 8:11) "And a thick (עתר) cloud of incense" which means an abundance of ascending smoke; (Ezekiel 35:13) "You have multiplied (העתרתם) your words against me"; (Proverbs 27:6) "The kisses of an enemy are importunate (נעתרות)"—they appear to be too many and therefore they are burdensome. old French encresser; English to increase.

25:21 FACING HIS WIFE — He stood in one corner and prayed whilst she stood in the other corner and prayed (Genesis Rabbah 63:5).

25:21 [AND THE LORD] WAS ENTREATED OF HIM — of him and not of her, because there is no comparison between the prayer of a righteous person who is the son of a righteous person and the prayer of a righteous person the child of a wicked-person — therefore God allowed himself to be entreated of him and not of her (Yevamot 64a).

25:22 AND [THE CHILDREN] STRUGGLED — You must admit that this verse calls for a Midrashic interpretation since it leaves unexplained what this struggling was about and it states that she exclaimed "If it be so, wherefore did I desire this" (i.e. she asked whether this was the normal course of child-bearing, feeling that something extraordinary was happening). Our Rabbis explain that the word ויתרוצצו has the meaning of running, moving quickly: whenever she passed by the doors of the Torah (i. e. the Schools of Shem and Eber) Jacob moved convulsively in his efforts to come to birth, but whenever she passed by the gate of a pagan temple Esau moved convulsively in his efforts to come to birth (Genesis Rabbah 63:6). Another explanation is: they struggled with one another and quarrelled as to how they should divide the two worlds as their inheritance (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 111:2).

25:22 ותאמר אם כן means AND SHE SAID, "IF the pain of pregnancy be so great,

25:22 WHY IS IT that I longed and prayed to become pregnant?" (Genesis Rabbah 63:6).

25:22 AND SHE WENT TO ENQUIRE at the school of Shem (Genesis Rabbah 63:6).

25:22 TO ENQUIRE OF THE LORD, that He might tell her what would happen to her at the end.

כג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנֵי (גיים) [גוֹיִם] בְּבִטְנֵךְ
וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים מִמֵּעַיִךְ יִפָּרֵדוּ וּלְאֹם מִלְאֹם
יָאֱמָץ וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר:

כד וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת וְהִנֵּה תוֹמִם בְּבִטְנָהּ:

כה וַיֵּצֵא הָרִאשׁוֹן אַדְמוֹנִי כֻּלּוֹ כְּאַדֶּרֶת שֵׂעָר
וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו:

כו וְאָחֵרֵי־כֵן יָצָא אָחִיו וְיָדוֹ אֹחֶזֶת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו
וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וְיִצְחָק בֶּן־שִׁשִּׁים שָׁנָה
בְּלֶדֶת אֹתָם:

23 and the LORD answered her, "Two nations are in your womb, Two separate peoples shall issue from your body; One people shall be mightier than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

24 When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb.

25 The first one emerged red, like a hairy mantle all over; so they named him Esau.

26 Then his brother emerged, holding on to the heel of Esau; so they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

23 **The Lord said to her: Two peoples,** or national leaders (see, e.g., 17:16), **are in your womb, and two nations shall be separated from your innards.** From the moment they are born it will be clear that they are very different from one another. **One nation will prevail over the other nation,** as the struggle between them, which you sense within your womb, will continue after they are born. **And the elder shall serve the younger.** Even in the case of twins, one is born before the other and is the elder. 24 **Her days to give birth were complete, and behold, there were twins in her womb.** 25 **The first emerged** with **red** skin, redder than that of an average person. And he was covered, **all of him like a cloak of hair,** as he was very hairy. **And they called his name Esau,** perhaps due to his hair [se'ar], or because he appeared mature, like an object that is fully fashioned [asui]. 26 **And thereafter his brother emerged.** Their birth, like her pregnancy, was unusual, as **his hand** was **grasping Esau's heel [akev]; and he called his name Jacob [Ya'akov]. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.** Since he married Rebecca at the age of forty, evidently they had lived twenty years as a childless couple.

SELECTED RASHI

25:23 AND THE ETERNAL SAID UNTO HER through a messenger: it was told to Shem by holy inspiration and he told it to her (Genesis Rabbah 63:7).

25:23 TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB —The word is written גיים (exalted, noble persons), an allusion to Antoninus and Rabbi (Rabbi Judah the Prince) from whose table neither radish nor lettuce was absent neither in summer nor in winter (Avodah Zarah 11a)

25:23 AND TWO RACES — The word לאם always denotes a people that has all the characteristics of a kingdom (Avodah Zarah 2b)

25:23 SHALL BE PARTED FROM THY BOWELS —as soon as they leave thy body they will take each a different course — one to his wicked ways, the other to his plain life (Genesis 5:27)

25:23 SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER RACE —They will never be equally great at the same time: when one rises the other will fall. Thus it says, (Ezekiel 26:2) "[Because Tyre (colonised by Esau) says about Jerusalem] I shall be filled with her that is laid waste" — Tyre became full (powerful) only through the ruin of Jerusalem (Megillah 6a).

25:24 BEHOLD, THERE WERE TWINS — The word for twins is written defective (without א and י) whilst in the case of Tamar it is written תאומים (with א and י); because in the latter case both children proved righteous whilst here one was righteous and the other wicked (Genesis Rabbah 63:8).

25:25 RED — a sign that he would always be shedding blood (Genesis Rabbah 63:8).

25:25 כלו כאדרת שער means full of hair like a woolen garment that is full of hair. (Old French floche; English flock).

25:25 AND THEY CALLED HIS NAME ESAU — every one called him thus because he was made (עשה means to make) and fully developed with hair as a lad several years old.

25:26 ESAU'S HEEL — a sign that this one (Esau) will hardly have time to complete his period of domination before the other would rise and take it (his power) from him

25:26 AND HE CALLED HIS NAME JACOB — The Holy One, blessed be He, thus named him (Midrash Tanchuma, Shemot 4). [Some versions add: He said to them (to those who gave Esau that name cf. Genesis 5:25): You have given your first-born a name, I, too, will give my son, my firstborn, (cf. Exodus 4:23) a name. That is what is written, "And He called his name, Jacob" (Genesis 26:26).] Another explanation is: his father called him Jacob because he was grasping Esau's heel.

כזוַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יֹדֵעַ צַיִד
אִישׁ שָׂדֶה וְיַעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהָלִים:

27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Jacob was a mild man who stayed in camp.

BERESHIT RABBAH 63:10 P. 36 Why did two brothers raised together turn out so differently?

כחוַיֶּאֱהַב יִצְחָק אֶת־עֵשָׂו כִּי־צַיִד בְּפִיו וְרִבְקָה
אֹהֶבֶת אֶת־יַעֲקֹב:

28 Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob.

SFORNO & RADAK P. 42 Why Yitzchak favored Esav but Rivkah favored Yaakov

THE NETZIV P. 56 Why Yitzchak and Rivkah loved their sons differently

כטוַיָּזֶד יַעֲקֹב נָזִיד וַיָּבֹא עֵשָׂו מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא
עָיֵף:

29 Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open, famished.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

27 **The lads grew,** and the prophecy that they would follow different paths indeed came to pass. Alongside their joint family obligations in housekeeping and agriculture, their diverse natures began to show: **Esau was a man who knew hunting,** an adventurer who was dissatisfied with domestic tasks and ventured out to hunt animals, **a man of the** large **field,** of the open plains. **And Jacob was a guileless man,** uninterested in the ruses of hunting, in ambushes and setting traps. He led a sedentary lifestyle, **living in tents.** Alternatively, the verse could mean that he was a shepherd, expert in tending flocks, as can be seen from later events in his life. 28 **And Isaac loved Esau because of the game in his mouth, and Rebecca loved Jacob.** It is possible that Rebecca's preference for Jacob was due to the fact that he lived at home, in close proximity to her. 29 One day **Jacob,** who was home much of the time, **stewed a stew. Esau came from the field,** probably after an unsuccessful hunting expedition, **and he was weary,** exhausted and thirsty.

SELECTED RASHI

25:27 ויהי עשו ... ויגדלו AND THEY GREW ... AND ESAU WAS — So long as they were young they could not be distinguished by what they did and no one paid much attention to their characters, but when they reached the age of thirteen, one went his way to the houses of learning and the other went his way to the idolatrous temples (Genesis Rabbah 63:10).

25:27 A CUNNING HUNTER literally, understanding hunting — understanding how to entrap and deceive his father with his mouth. He would ask him, "Father how should salt and straw be tithed"? (Genesis Rabbah 63:10) (although he knew full well that these are not subject to the law of tithe). Consequently his father believed him to be very punctilious in observing the divine ordinances.

25:27 A MAN OF THE FIELD — Explain it literally (i.e., not in a Midrashic manner): a man without regular occupation, hunting beasts and birds with his bow.

25:27 A PLAIN MAN — not expert in all these things: as his heart was his mouth (his thoughts and his words tallied). One who is not ingenious in deceiving people is called תם plain, simple.

25:27 DWELLING IN TENTS — the tent of Shem and the tent of Eber (Genesis Rabbah 63:10).

25:28 [THERE WAS HUNTING] IN HIS MOUTH — Understand this as the Targum renders it: in Isaac's mouth (i. e. Isaac ate the venison he brought home). But its Midrashic explanation is: there was hunting in Esau's mouth, meaning that he used to entrap and deceive him by his words (Genesis Rabbah 63:10).

25:29 ויזד means boiling, as the Targum renders it.

25:29 AND HE WAS FAINT through murdering people, just as you mention faintness in connection with murder, (Jeremiah 4:31) "For my soul fainteth before the murderers" (Genesis Rabbah 63:12).

30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished"—which is why he was named Edom.

ל וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הַלְעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן־הָאָדֹם הָאָדֹם הַזֶּה כִּי עָיֵף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֱדוֹם׃

31 Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."

לא וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב מִכְרָה כַיּוֹם אֶת־בְּכֹרָתְךָ לִי׃

32 And Esau said, "I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?"

לב וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת וְלָמָּה־זֶּה לִי בְּכֹרָה׃

33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

לג וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב הִשָּׁבְעָה לִּי כַּיּוֹם וַיִּשָּׁבַע לוֹ וַיִּמְכֹּר אֶת־בְּכֹרָתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

30 **Esau said to Jacob: Feed me please from that red, red [adom ha'adom] dish.** Esau did not know what red food was in the pot. He said: Please feed me, **as I am** so **weary** that it is too hard for me to bring a spoon to my own mouth. In this connection the verse notes: **Therefore his name is called Edom.** This incident, in which Esau connected himself to a red [adom] dish, stuck to him for the rest of his life and to his descendants for many later generations, to the point that Edom became his alternate designation. 31 **Jacob said:** Just as you have a request from me, I too have something to ask of you. **Sell me your birthright this day,** meaning now. 32 **And Esau said: Behold, I am going to die;** I am so tired that I feel that I am about to collapse. **For what do I need a birthright?** Even if some sort of financial benefit will accrue from the birthright, it will be actualized only in the distant future, and Esau the hunter is not a calculating individual who makes long-term plans. 33 **Jacob said:** I am not satisfied with a simple declaration that you don't care about the birthright. Rather, **take an oath to me this day** that you are transferring it to me. **He took an oath to him** that the birthright would belong to him, **and he sold his birthright to Jacob.** It is possible that the stew was given in payment for the birthright. However, it can be argued that as part of the family meal, the stew was not Jacob's to sell to his brother. If so, perhaps Esau sold the birthright for a substantial sum, which Jacob handed over immediately or promised to give at a later time.

SELECTED RASHI

25:30 LET ME SWALLOW — I will open my mouth and you pour a lot in. The word is really used of feeding animals as we find the word in the Mishna, (Shabbat 155b) "One may not fatten up a camel on the Sabbath but one may put food (מלעיטין) into its mouth. "

25:30 FROM THIS RED, EVEN THIS RED THING —red lentils. On that day Abraham had died in order that he might not see his grandson Esau falling into degenerate ways. This would not have been the "good old age" (cf. 25:8) which God had promised him; therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, cut his life short by five years — for Isaac lived 180 years and he only one hundred and seventy five. Jacob was boiling lentils to provide the customary first meal for the immediate mourners. Why should lentils be the mourner's food? Because they are round like a wheel and mourning (sorrow) is a wheel that revolves in the world (it touches everyone sooner or later as a revolving wheel touches every spot in turn) (Bava Batra 16b). And a further reason is: just as lentils have no mouth — (the word mouth פה is used in Hebrew of a serrated edge) — so, too, mourners have no mouth (appear dumb), for speech (greeting others) is forbidden to them. For this reason, also, it is customary to give eggs to a mourner as his first meal, because they are round and have no mouth (serrated edge) and similarly a mourner has no mouth (may not greet others), just as we say in Moed Katan 21b. "A mourner during the first three days (of the week of mourning) may not respond to the greeting of any person — it follows, of course, that he may not be the first to greet anyone — and from the third to the seventh day he may respond to a greeting but may not be the first to offer a greeting etc." From "And a further reason" is to be found in an old Rashi text.

25:31 SELL ME THIS DAY (literally, like the day) — Explain it as the Targum renders it "as this day": just as this day is certain, so make me a sure sale.

25:31 THY BIRTHRIGHT — Because the sacrificial service was then carried out by the first-born sons, Jacob said, "This wicked man is unworthy to sacrifice to the Holy One, blessed be He" (Genesis Rabbah 63:13).

25:32 BEHOLD I AM IN PERIL TO DIE — The birthright is something unstable, for not always will the sacrificial duties be performed by the first-born, for the tribe of Levi will assume this. Further Esau said: What is the nature of this Service? Jacob replied, "Many prohibitions and punishments and many acts involving even the punishment of death are associated with it — just as we read in the Mishna, (Sanhedrin 22b): The following priests are liable to death: those who carry out their duties after having drunk too much wine and those who officiate long-haired. He said: If I am going to die through it, why should I desire it.

[34] Jacob then gave Esau bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, and he rose and went away. Thus did Esau spurn the birthright.

לד וְיַעֲקֹ֗ב נָתַן֙ לְעֵשָׂ֔ו לֶ֖חֶם וּנְזִ֣יד עֲדָשִׁ֑ים וַיֹּ֣אכַל וַיֵּ֔שְׁתְּ וַיָּ֖קָם וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ וַיִּבֶ֔ז עֵשָׂ֖ו אֶת־הַבְּכֹרָֽה׃

[1] There was a famine in the land—aside from the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham—and Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

א וַיְהִ֥י רָעָ֖ב בָּאָ֑רֶץ מִלְּבַד֙ הָרָעָ֣ב הָרִאשׁ֔וֹן אֲשֶׁ֖ר הָיָ֣ה בִּימֵ֣י אַבְרָהָ֑ם וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ יִצְחָ֗ק אֶל־אֲבִימֶ֙לֶךְ֙ מֶ֣לֶךְ־פְּלִשְׁתִּ֔ים גְּרָֽרָה׃

[2] The LORD had appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land which I point out to you.

ב וַיֵּרָ֥א אֵלָ֖יו יְהוָ֑ה וַיֹּ֗אמֶר אַל־תֵּרֵ֙ד֙ מִצְרַ֔יְמָה שְׁכֹ֖ן בָּאָ֥רֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אֹמַ֖ר אֵלֶֽיךָ׃

[3] Reside in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; I will assign all these lands to you and to your heirs, fulfilling the oath that I swore to your father Abraham.

ג גּ֚וּר בָּאָ֣רֶץ הַזֹּ֔את וְאֶֽהְיֶ֥ה עִמְּךָ֖ וַאֲבָרְכֶ֑ךָּ כִּֽי־לְךָ֣ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ֗ אֶתֵּ֞ן אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצֹ֤ת הָאֵל֙ וַהֲקִמֹתִ֣י אֶת־הַשְּׁבֻעָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר נִשְׁבַּ֖עְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָ֥ם אָבִֽיךָ׃

[4] I will make your heirs as numerous as the stars of heaven, and assign to your heirs all these lands, so that all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your heirs—

ד וְהִרְבֵּיתִ֞י אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ֣ כְּכוֹכְבֵ֣י הַשָּׁמַ֗יִם וְנָתַתִּ֣י לְזַרְעֲךָ֔ אֵ֖ת כָּל־הָאֲרָצֹ֣ת הָאֵ֑ל וְהִתְבָּרְכ֣וּ בְזַרְעֲךָ֔ כֹּ֖ל גּוֹיֵ֥י הָאָֽרֶץ׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[34] **And Jacob gave Esau bread and a stew of lentils.** Jacob fed Esau, in accordance with the custom to eat a meal at the conclusion of an acquisition. By serving a meal, Jacob exhibited the seriousness of the purchase of the birthright for him. **He,** Esau, **ate** and **he drank,** and after he recovered and realized that he was not going to die, **he arose, and he went, and Esau scorned the birthright.** He remembered the sale, but he considered the entire incident ridiculous, pointless, and meaningless. [1] **There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was during the days of Abraham. Isaac,** who was a shepherd living in the south of the land of Canaan, **went to Avimelekh king of the Philistines, to Gerar.** Avimelekh was one of the local rulers of the Philistines, and perhaps he was king over all the Philistines at the time. [2] **The Lord appeared to him, and said: Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land that I will tell you.** Like the other forefathers, Isaac too merited a divine revelation. [3] **Reside in this land, and I will be with you, and I will bless you; for I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants, and I will keep the oath that I took to Abraham your father.** You belong to this land, and it belongs to you and your descendants, and therefore you must stay here and live here. [4] **And I will multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens, and I will give to your descendants all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed through your descendants.**

SELECTED RASHI

25:34 THUS ESAU DESPISED—Scripture testifies to his wickedness: that he despised the Service of the Omnipresent!

26:2 GO NOT DOWN INTO EGYPT — Because he thought of going down to Egypt as his father had gone down in time of famine. He said to him, "Do not go down to Egypt for you are a burnt-offering without blemish and residence outside the Holy Land is not befitting you" (Genesis Rabbah 64:3).

[5] inasmuch as Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings."

ה עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקּוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתָי׃

RAMBAN & RASHBAM P. 43 Did Avraham keep the Torah before it was given at Sinai?



THE READING · GENESIS 26:6–12

שני

Second Aliyah

Yitzchak settles in Gerar and, when the men of the place ask about his wife, tells them Rivkah is his sister out of fear that they will kill him for her beauty. After Avimelech king of the Philistines sees Yitzchak fondling Rivkah, he rebukes Yitzchak, orders the people not to touch them on pain of death, and Yitzchak sows in that land and reaps a hundredfold that year, as G-d blesses him. AI SUMMARY

[6] So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

ו וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק בִּגְרָר׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[5] However, your right to the land is not due exclusively to your own merit; rather, it originated **because Abraham heeded My voice, and kept My commission, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.** [6] **Isaac lived in Gerar.** Since he was prohibited from leaving for Egypt, Isaac remained in Gerar.

SELECTED RASHI

26:5 ABRAHAM HEARKENED TO MY VOICE when I put him to the test.

26:5 AND KEPT MY CHARGE — This refers to precautionary measures which are intended to make us avoid the infringement of Biblical prohibitions: such are the Rabbinical inhibition of marriage between relatives in the second degree and the Rabbinical regulations regarding not doing certain acts on the Sabbath (cf. Yevamot 21a).

26:5 MY COMMANDMENTS — those matters which, had they not been written in the Torah, we would nevertheless hold that they are fitting matters to be the subject of a commandment, such as robbery and murder (cf. Yoma 67b).

26:5 MY ORDINANCES — matters which our evil inclination and the heathen nations argue against the necessity of prohibiting, such as the eating of swine's flesh and the wearing of garments made of a mixture of wool and linen — things for which there are no apparent reasons but which are the King's decrees and enactments imposed on His subjects (Yoma 67b).

26:5 AND MY LAWS — The plural serves to include with the written Law also the Oral Law which prescribes commands that are an ancient institution given by God to Moses from Sinai (cf. Genesis Rabbah 64:4).

ז וַיִּשְׁאֲלוּ֩ אַנְשֵׁ֨י הַמָּק֜וֹם לְאִשְׁתּ֗וֹ וַיֹּ֙אמֶר֙ אֲחֹ֣תִי
הִ֔וא כִּ֣י יָרֵ֔א לֵאמֹ֕ר אִשְׁתִּ֖י פֶּן־יַהַרְגֻ֣נִי אַנְשֵׁ֑י
הַמָּק֗וֹם עַל־רִבְקָ֛ה כִּי־טוֹבַ֥ת מַרְאֶ֖ה הִֽוא׃

7 When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say "my wife," thinking, "The men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful."

ח וַיְהִ֗י כִּ֤י אָרְכ֙וּ־לוֹ֙ שָׁ֔ם הַיָּמִ֑ים וַיַּשְׁקֵ֞ף
אֲבִימֶ֣לֶךְ מֶֽלֶךְ־פְּלִשְׁתִּ֗ים בְּעַ֙ד הַחַלּ֔וֹן וַיַּ֖רְא
וְהִנֵּ֣ה יִצְחָ֔ק מְצַחֵ֖ק אֵ֥ת רִבְקָ֖ה אִשְׁתּֽוֹ׃

8 When some time had passed, Abimelech king of the Philistines, looking out of the window, saw Isaac fondling his wife Rebekah.

ט וַיִּקְרָ֣א אֲבִימֶ֣לֶךְ לְיִצְחָ֔ק וַיֹּ֖אמֶר אַ֣ךְ הִנֵּ֑ה
אִשְׁתְּךָ֣ הִ֔וא וְאֵ֣יךְ אָמַ֔רְתָּ אֲחֹ֥תִי הִ֖וא וַיֹּ֣אמֶר
אֵלָ֗יו יִצְחָק֙ כִּ֣י אָמַ֔רְתִּי פֶּן־אָמ֖וּת עָלֶֽיהָ׃

9 Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, "So she is your wife! Why then did you say: 'She is my sister?'" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her."

י וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֲבִימֶ֔לֶךְ מַה־זֹּ֖את עָשִׂ֣יתָ לָּ֑נוּ כִּמְעַ֗ט
שָׁכַ֤ב אַחַד֙ הָעָ֔ם אֶת־אִשְׁתֶּ֖ךָ וְהֵבֵ֥אתָ עָלֵ֖ינוּ
אָשָֽׁם׃

10 Abimelech said, "What have you done to us! One of the people might have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."

יא וַיְצַ֥ו אֲבִימֶ֖לֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָ֣ם לֵאמֹ֑ר הַנֹּגֵ֥עַ
בָּאִ֛ישׁ הַזֶּ֥ה וּבְאִשְׁתּ֖וֹ מ֥וֹת יוּמָֽת׃

11 Abimelech then charged all the people, saying, "Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall be put to death."

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

7 **The men of the place asked him with regard to his wife. He said: She is my sister.** Isaac thereby followed Abraham's example (12:13, 20:2). In a sense his claim was justified, as Rebecca was related to him. It is possible that Isaac and Rebecca were similar enough in appearance that this contention would be accepted. **As he was afraid to say:** She is **my wife,** for he said to himself: **Lest the men of the place kill me over Rebecca, because she is of fair appearance.** An earlier verse already mentioned Rebecca's beauty as a young girl (24:16), but her age at the time of this incident is not stated. Perhaps due to the negative experience of the residents of Gerar during Abraham's earlier visit (20:1–18), they accepted Isaac's claim at face value, and were careful not to take a woman from his tribe. 8 Yet, **it was when the days he was there were extended,** and Isaac was less careful; **Avimelekh king of the Philistines looked out through the window,** as he presumably lived in a palace that was taller than the surrounding buildings, **and behold, he saw Isaac** in his house **playing,** engaging in sexual activity, **with Rebecca his wife.** 9 **Avimelekh summoned Isaac and said: Behold,** I have seen that **she is your wife; how did you say: She is my sister?** Why did you deceive me? **Isaac said to him: Because I said,** or I thought to myself: **Lest I die over her.** If I reveal that she is my wife, they might kill me and take her. 10 **Avimelekh said: What is this that you have done to us,** by cheating us? **One of** the men of **the people almost lay with your wife; you would have brought guilt,** sin, **upon us.** Whether this is the same Avimelekh as in the days of Abraham or a different individual, what unfolded when Sarah was taken (see chap. 20) had not been forgotten in Avimelekh's household. Therefore, Isaac did not rely on the moral probity of the residents of Gerar. 11 **Avimelekh commanded all the people, saying: Anyone who touches this man or his wife,** as it has now been established that Rebecca is Isaac's wife, **shall be put to death.**

SELECTED RASHI

26:8 WHEN HE HAD BEEN THERE A LONG TIME — He thought, "From now I need have no fear since they have not molested her up to now", and he was not sufficiently strict in guarding his actions (Genesis 20:13).

[12] Isaac sowed in that land and reaped a hundredfold the same year. The LORD blessed him,

יבוַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בָּאָרֶץ הַהִוא וַיִּמְצָא בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִוא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה:



THE READING · GENESIS 26:13–22

שלישי

Third Aliyah

Yitzchak grows very wealthy in Gerar, and the Philistines, envious of him, stop up the wells his father's servants dug in Avraham's days, so Avimelech tells him to leave. Yitzchak then redigs those wells, gives them their old names, and after quarrels over two more wells (named Esek and Sitnah) he digs a third, Rechovot, where no one contends with him, and declares that G-d has made room for them in the land. AI SUMMARY

[13] and the man grew richer and richer until he was very wealthy:

יגוַיִּגְדַּל הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ וְגָדֵל עַד כִּי־גָדַל מְאֹד:

[14] he acquired flocks and herds, and a large household, so that the Philistines envied him.

ידוַיְהִי־לוֹ מִקְנֵה־צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בָקָר וַעֲבֻדָּה רַבָּה וַיְקַנְאוּ אֹתוֹ פְּלִשְׁתִּים:

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[12] Up to this point, the incidents in Isaac's life parallel events that occurred in Abraham's life. The focus now turns to deeds performed by Isaac that were apparently not done by his father. It is likely that Abraham the nomad was occupied mainly with shepherding. In contrast, Isaac, who lived in Gerar, engaged also in agriculture. **Isaac sowed in that land and found in that year one hundredfold.** He reaped one hundred times what he sowed, a very respectable yield even nowadays. **And** the explanation for this unusually large crop is that **the Lord blessed him.** [13] **The man grew wealthy, and continued to grow until he became very wealthy.** Since Isaac grew more crops than he required, he sold the surplus and became wealthy as a result. [14] **He had livestock of flocks, and livestock of cattle, and a great household,** a general term covering slaves, maidservants, and all his household staff; **the Philistines envied him,** as his neighbors were not similarly blessed in their fields.

טו וְכָל־הַבְּאֵרֹת אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ עַבְדֵי אָבִיו בִּימֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו סִתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיְמַלְאוּם עָפָר׃

15 And the Philistines stopped up all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham, filling them with earth.

טז וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ אֶל־יִצְחָק לֵךְ מֵעִמָּנוּ כִּי־עָצַמְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מְאֹד׃

16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you have become far too big for us."

יז וַיֵּלֶךְ מִשָּׁם יִצְחָק וַיִּחַן בְּנַחַל־גְּרָר וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם׃

17 So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the wadi of Gerar, where he settled.

יח וַיָּשָׁב יִצְחָק וַיַּחְפֹּר | אֶת־בְּאֵרֹת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ בִּימֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיְסַתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקְרָא לָהֶן שֵׁמוֹת כַּשֵּׁמֹת אֲשֶׁר־קָרָא לָהֶן אָבִיו׃

18 Isaac dug anew the wells which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham and which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham's death; and he gave them the same names that his father had given them.

יט וַיַּחְפְּרוּ עַבְדֵי־יִצְחָק בַּנָּחַל וַיִּמְצְאוּ־שָׁם בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים׃

19 But when Isaac's servants, digging in the wadi, found there a well of spring water,

כ וַיָּרִיבוּ רֹעֵי גְרָר עִם־רֹעֵי יִצְחָק לֵאמֹר לָנוּ הַמָּיִם וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־הַבְּאֵר עֵשֶׂק כִּי הִתְעַשְּׂקוּ עִמּוֹ׃

20 the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." He named that well Esek, because they contended with him.

RAMBAN P. 40 Why does the Torah dwell on Yitzchak's three wells?

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

15 Here the chapter inserts a comment that will be important for the continuation of the story: **All the cisterns that his father's servants dug in the days of Abraham, his father, the Philistines sealed them** after Abraham left Gerar, **and filled them with earth.** Isaac was uncomfortable in Gerar not only due to his great wealth, which aroused envy among his neighbors, but also because his father's wells had been filled with earth. 16 The envy and general resentment of the residents of Gerar toward Isaac also finds expression in a statement of the king, which represents the overall feeling of the public. **Avimelekh said to Isaac: Leave us, for you have grown much mightier than we.** You are too strong for us; one who grows wealthy in such an irregular manner is liable to upset the social and political balance in our community. 17 **Isaac left there,** probably southward, **and he encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there.** 18 As he required water in his new place, **Isaac again dug the cisterns of water that they had dug in the days of Abraham, his father, and that the Philistines had sealed after the death of Abraham.** There were certainly sufficient markers by which he could locate the wells. **He called them names like the names that his father called them.** Due to their importance, the serviceable wells were given names. 19 **Isaac's servants dug in the valley,** as it is easy to find ground water in the channels of streams, **and they found there a well of fresh water.** 20 **The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying: The water is ours.** Since you are residing near our city of Gerar, in our territory, the water belongs to us. **He called the name of the well Esek, because they involved themselves** [**hitasseku**], fought, **with him.**

SELECTED RASHI

26:15 THE PHILISTINES STOPPED THEM, saying, "They may become a source of danger to us because of marauding troops that may invade us" (i.e.,they may invade our country to obtain possession of the wells, or if they invade us for any other reason they will be able to find a supply of water). (Tosafot Sotah 10.) The rendering of the Targum טמונין means "stopping up" and we find it in the language of the Talmud (Pesachim 42a) "Chokes up (מטמטם) the heart".

כאוַיַּחְפְּרוּ בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וַיָּרִיבוּ גַּם־עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ שִׂטְנָה׃

21 And when they dug another well, they disputed over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.

כבוַיַּעְתֵּק מִשָּׁם וַיַּחְפֹּר בְּאֵר אַחֶרֶת וְלֹא רָבוּ עָלֶיהָ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ רְחֹבוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־עַתָּה הִרְחִיב יְהוָה לָנוּ וּפָרִינוּ בָאָרֶץ׃

22 He moved from there and dug yet another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rehoboth, saying, “Now at last the LORD has granted us ample space to increase in the land.”



THE READING · GENESIS 26:23–29

רביעי
Fourth Aliyah

Yitzchak goes up to Be'er Sheva, where G-d appears to him that night and promises to bless him and multiply his descendants for the sake of His servant Avraham. Yitzchak builds an altar there and calls on G-d by name, and his servants dig a well. Avimelech comes from Gerar with his adviser and his general, admits that G-d is with Yitzchak, and proposes a sworn pact: Yitzchak will do them no harm, just as they did him none and sent him away in peace. AI SUMMARY

כגוַיַּעַל מִשָּׁם בְּאֵר שָׁבַע׃

23 From there he went up to Beer-sheba.

כדוַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ אַל־תִּירָא כִּי־אִתְּךָ אָנֹכִי וּבֵרַכְתִּיךָ וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ בַּעֲבוּר אַבְרָהָם עַבְדִּי׃

24 That night the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Fear not, for I am with you, and I will bless you and increase your offspring for the sake of My servant Abraham.”

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

21 **They,** Isaac’s servants, **dug another well, and they,** the Philistines, **quarreled over it as well. He called it Sitna,** accusation. 22 Again **he,** Isaac, **moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. He called its name Rehovot, and he said: As now the Lord has expanded space** [hirḥiv] **for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land;** now we can dwell in our place in peace. Isaac assumed that the herdsmen of Gerar would likely leave this particular well alone, as they preferred to tend their flocks nearer to their city, and the well was situated far from their territory. 23 **He,** Isaac, **ascended from there to Beersheba,** which was at a higher altitude than his previous location in the Valley of Gerar, as Beersheba was built on a raised area. It is also possible that Isaac’s move to Beersheba is described as an ascension due to the importance of the city. 24 **The Lord appeared to him that night and said: I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not,** despite the fact that you have been forced to move due to the provocations of the Philistines, **as I am with you; I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of My servant Abraham.**

כהוַיִּבֶן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וַיֵּט־שָׁם
אָהֳלוֹ וַיִּכְרוּ־שָׁם עַבְדֵי־יִצְחָק בְּאֵר׃

כוַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ הָלַךְ אֵלָיו מִגְּרָר וַאֲחֻזַּת מֵרֵעֵהוּ וּפִיכֹל שַׂר־צְבָאוֹ׃

כזוַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יִצְחָק מַדּוּעַ בָּאתֶם אֵלָי וְאַתֶּם שְׂנֵאתֶם אֹתִי וַתְּשַׁלְּחוּנִי מֵאִתְּכֶם׃

כחוַיֹּאמְרוּ רָאוֹ רָאִינוּ כִּי־הָיָה יְהוָה | עִמָּךְ וַנֹּאמֶר תְּהִי נָא אָלָה בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ בֵּינֵינוּ וּבֵינֶךָ וְנִכְרְתָה בְרִית עִמָּךְ׃

כטאִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה עִמָּנוּ רָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא נְגָעֲנוּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂינוּ עִמְּךָ רַק־טוֹב וַנְּשַׁלְּחֲךָ בְּשָׁלוֹם אַתָּה עַתָּה בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה׃

25 So he built an altar there and invoked the LORD by name. Isaac pitched his tent there and his servants started digging a well.

26 And Abimelech came to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his councilor and Phicol chief of his troops.

27 Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, seeing that you have been hostile to me and have driven me away from you?”

28 And they said, “We now see plainly that the LORD has been with you, and we thought: Let there be a sworn treaty between our two parties, between you and us. Let us make a pact with you

29 that you will not do us harm, just as we have not molested you but have always dealt kindly with you and sent you away in peace. From now on, be you blessed of the LORD!”

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

25 **He built an altar there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.** Like Abraham, Isaac performed a ceremony or prayer in which he publicly invoked God’s name. **And he pitched his tent there. And Isaac’s servants dug a well there,** near Beersheba. 26 Later, **Avimelekh** king of the Philistines **went to him,** Isaac, **from Gerar, with a group of his associates and Pikhol the captain of his guard.** 27 Upon seeing the arrival of a friendly delegation, **Isaac said to them: Why did you come to me?** After all, **you hated me, and you sent me from among you.** 28 **They said: We saw that the Lord was with you,** since you grew and prospered beyond the status of a private individual, **and** therefore **we said: Let there please be an oath** of a covenant **between us, between us and you; we will establish a covenant with you:** 29 **If you will** or so that you will **do us no harm, when we have not touched you, and when we have done only good with you, and we sent you in peace.** While it is true that we feared you and banished you from our land, nevertheless you lived among us for a certain period and were not sent away in a violent manner or with hatred. Perhaps we were mistaken in dismissing you; in any case we see that **you are now the blessed of the Lord,** and therefore we wish to establish a covenant with you.

SELECTED RASHI

26:28 תהי נא אלה בינותינו וגו׳ means LET THE OATH that has existed BETWEEN US since the days of your father CONTINUE NOW BETWEEN US AND YOU.



THE READING · GENESIS 26:30–27:27

חמישי

Fifth Aliyah

The Torah tells how, after a feast and an exchange of oaths, Yitzchak sends his visitors away in peace. The same day his servants report finding water in the well they dug, which is why the city is called Be'er Sheva. Esav's Hittite wives are a source of bitterness to Yitzchak and Rivkah, and when the blind, aging Yitzchak asks Esav to hunt and prepare food for his blessing, Rivkah has Yaakov disguise himself as Esav with goatskins and bring the food, and Yitzchak, after feeling him and eating, blesses Yaakov. AI SUMMARY

30 Then he made for them a feast, and they ate and drank.	לוַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם֙ מִשְׁתֶּ֔ה וַיֹּאכְל֖וּ וַיִּשְׁתּֽוּ׃
31 Early in the morning, they exchanged oaths. Isaac then bade them farewell, and they departed from him in peace.	לאוַיַּשְׁכִּימ֣וּ בַבֹּ֔קֶר וַיִּשָּׁבְע֥וּ אִ֖ישׁ לְאָחִ֑יו וַיְשַׁלַּ֣ח יִצְחָ֔ק וַיֵּלְכ֥וּ מֵאִתּ֖וֹ בְּשָׁלֽוֹם׃
32 That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water!"	לב וַיְהִי֩	בַּיּ֨וֹם הַה֜וּא וַיָּבֹ֣אוּ עַבְדֵ֣י יִצְחָ֗ק וַיַּגִּדוּ־ל֤וֹ עַל־אֹדוֹת֙ הַבְּאֵ֣ר אֲשֶׁר־חָפָ֔רוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ־ל֖וֹ מָצָ֥אנוּ מָֽיִם׃
33 He named it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba to this day.	לגוַיִּקְרָ֣א אֹתָ֔הּ שִׁבְעָ֑ה עַל־כֵּ֗ן שֵׁם־הָעִיר֙ בְּאֵ֣ר שֶׁ֔בַע עַ֖ד הַיּ֥וֹם הַזֶּֽה׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

30 Isaac agreed, and **he made a feast for them, and they ate and drank,** in accordance with the custom after establishing a covenant. 31 **They awoke in the morning and took oaths to one another** that they would keep the covenant and maintain friendly relations from that time forward. **Isaac sent them** back, **and they went from him in peace.** 32 **It was on that day** that Avimelekh left, and **Isaac's servants came and told him with regard to the well that they had dug.** Isaac's servants had continued digging wells. **They said to him: We have** again **found water.** 33 **He called it Shiva,** in allusion to the oath [shevua] **; therefore, the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.**

לד וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה אֶת־
יְהוּדִית בַּת־בְּאֵרִי הַחִתִּי וְאֶת־בָּשְׂמַת בַּת־אֵילֹן
הַחִתִּי:

34 When Esau was forty years old, he took to wife Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite;

BERESHIT RABBAH 65:1 ONLINE AT TORAHFORM.COM Why Esav's marriage at forty was not a fresh start

לה וַתִּהְיֶיןָ מֹרַת רוּחַ לְיִצְחָק וּלְרִבְקָה:

35 and they were a source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah.

א וַיְהִי כִּי־זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶיןָ עֵינָיו מֵרְאֹת
וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־עֵשָׂו | בְּנוֹ הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּנִי:

1 When Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." He answered, "Here I am."

BERESHIT RABBAH 65:9 ONLINE AT TORAHFORM.COM Why did aging and illness first appear with the patriarchs?

ב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נָא זָקַנְתִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי:

2 And he said, "I am old now, and I do not know how soon I may die.

ג וְעַתָּה שָׂא־נָא כֵלֶיךָ תֶּלְיְךָ וְקַשְׁתֶּךָ וְצֵא
הַשָּׂדֶה וְצוּדָה לִי (צידה) [צָיִד]:

3 Take your gear, your quiver and bow, and go out into the open and hunt me some game.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

34 **Esau was forty years old.** Esau tried to imitate his father, at least on the superficial level. Just as Isaac married at forty, at an age when one's mind is already settled, Esau did the same. **And he took as a wife Yehudit, daughter of Be'eri the Hitite, and Basmat, daughter of Eilon the Hitite,** who were two Hitite women. 35 The Torah attests: **They were a source of bitterness to Isaac and to Rebecca.**

1 **It was when Isaac was old, and his eyes dimmed from seeing,** as he became blind, or his sight diminished considerably; **he summoned Esau, his elder son, and said to him: My son. He,** Esau, **said to him: Here I am.** Esau responded in the proper manner, as there was a mutually positive relationship between father and son. 2 **He,** Isaac, **said: Behold, I have now grown old; I do not know the day of my death.** In actuality, Isaac lived far longer than he expected, for as it follows from various calculations, he did not die until many years after this episode. Perhaps due to his blindness and inactive life, he felt old and frail before his time. 3 **Now, please take your** hunting **gear, your quiver,** which is hung on one's back, **and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me.**

SELECTED RASHI

26:34 [AND ESAU WAS] FORTY YEARS OLD —Esau is compared to a boar, as it is said, (Psalms 80:14) "The boar from the wood doth ravage it". The boar when it lies down stretches forth its cloven hoof as much as to say, "See, I am a clean animal" (whilst really cloven hoofs are a feature of clean animals only in conjunction with another that is lacking in the swine). In the same way these dukes of Esau rob and extort and pretend to be honorable (Genesis Rabbah 65:1). For the whole forty years Esau enticed women from their husbands and ill-treated them; when he reached the age of forty he said, "My father took a wife when he was forty and I shall do the same" (Gen. R. 65).

26:35 [AND THEY WERE] A VEXATION OF SPIRIT — the expression means opposing the spirit of a person. The first word is of the same root as (Deuteronomy 9:24), "Ye have been rebellious (ממרים)": all their actions tended to be a grief

26:35 TO ISAAC AND REBEKAH, because they worshipped idols (Genesis Rabbah 65:4).

27:1 HIS EYES WERE DIM through the smoke raised by these women in offering incense to idols (Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 8). Another explanation is: When Isaac was bound upon the altar and his father was about to slay him, at that very moment the heavens opened, the ministering angels saw it and wept, and their tears flowed and fell upon Isaac's eyes which thus became dim (Genesis Rabbah 65:10). Another explanation is: They became dim just in order that Jacob might receive the blessings (Genesis Rabbah 65:8).

ד וַעֲשֵׂה־לִּי מַטְעַמִּים כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתִּי וְהָבִיאָה
לִּי וְאֹכֵלָה בַּעֲבוּר תְּבָרֶכְךָ נַפְשִׁי בְּטֶרֶם אָמוּת׃

4 Then prepare a dish for me such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my innermost blessing before I die.”

ה וְרִבְקָה שֹׁמַעַת בְּדַבֵּר יִצְחָק אֶל־עֵשָׂו בְּנוֹ
וַיֵּלֶךְ עֵשָׂו הַשָּׂדֶה לָצוּד צַיִד לְהָבִיא׃

5 Rebekah had been listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau had gone out into the open to hunt game to bring home,

ו וְרִבְקָה אָמְרָה אֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּנָהּ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה
שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־אָבִיךָ מְדַבֵּר אֶל־עֵשָׂו אָחִיךָ
לֵאמֹר׃

6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I overheard your father speaking to your brother Esau, saying,

ז הָבִיאָה לִי צַיִד וַעֲשֵׂה־לִי מַטְעַמִּים וְאֹכֵלָה
וַאֲבָרֶכְכָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִפְנֵי מוֹתִי׃

7 ‘Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, that I may bless you, with the LORD’s approval, before I die.’

ח וְעַתָּה בְנִי שְׁמַע בְּקֹלִי לַאֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה
אֹתָךְ׃

8 Now, my son, listen carefully as I instruct you.

ט לֶךְ־נָא אֶל־הַצֹּאן וְקַח־לִי מִשָּׁם שְׁנֵי גְדָיֵי
עִזִּים טֹבִים וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אֹתָם מַטְעַמִּים לְאָבִיךָ
כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהֵב׃

9 Go to the flock and fetch me two choice kids, and I will make of them a dish for your father, such as he likes.

י וְהֵבֵאתָ לְאָבִיךָ וְאָכָל בַּעֲבוּר אֲשֶׁר יְבָרֶכְךָ
לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ׃

10 Then take it to your father to eat, in order that he may bless you before he dies.”

יא וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־רִבְקָה אִמּוֹ הֵן עֵשָׂו אָחִי
אִישׁ שָׂעִר וְאָנֹכִי אִישׁ חָלָק׃

11 Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[4] **Prepare for me tasty food** from the animals you capture, **such as I like.** As stated above (25:28), Esau would regularly feed Isaac from the animals he hunted, and Isaac enjoyed such meals. **And bring it to me, and I will eat, so that my soul will bless you before I die.** [5] **Rebecca heard as Isaac spoke to Esau his son. Esau went to the field,** in accordance with his father’s command, **to hunt game** in order **to bring** it to him. [6] **Rebecca said to Jacob her son, saying: Behold, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying** as follows: [7] **Bring me game and prepare for me tasty food, and I will eat, and I will bless you before the Lord before my death.** [8] **Now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you.** Rebecca invokes her authority in her address to her son, as she is telling him to perform a complicated and ostensibly questionable maneuver. [9] **Please go to the flock and take for me from there two fine goat kids.** Rebecca assumed that Esau would return from his hunt with a deer or two. Consequently, she asked Jacob to bring two goat kids, which are similar in taste to deer. **And I will make them tasty food for your father, such as he likes.** Since she knew how to cook for her husband and was familiar with his sensitivities, it was likely that she could prepare him a dish of goat meat whose taste he would be unable to distinguish from that of deer meat. [10] **You shall bring it to your father and he will eat, so that he will bless you before his death.** [11] **And Jacob said to Rebecca his mother:** I cannot approach my father as Esau, as **behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man.** Covered with hair already at birth, Esau had become even more hairy over the years. **And I am a man of smooth skin.** Jacob might not have been entirely hairless, but he was smooth-skinned in comparison to Esau.

יבאוּלַי יְמֻשֵּׁנִי אָבִי וְהָיִיתִי בְעֵינָיו כִּמְתַעְתֵּעַ
וְהֵבֵאתִי עָלַי קְלָלָה וְלֹא בְרָכָה׃

יג וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קִלְלָתְךָ בְּנִי אַךְ שְׁמַע
בְּקֹלִי וְלֵךְ קַח־לִי׃

יד וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּקַּח וַיָּבֵא לְאִמּוֹ וַתַּעַשׂ אִמּוֹ מַטְעַמִּים
כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהֵב אָבִיו׃

טו וַתִּקַּח רִבְקָה אֶת־בִּגְדֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנָהּ הַגָּדֹל
הַחֲמֻדֹת אֲשֶׁר אִתָּהּ בַּבָּיִת וַתַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב
בְּנָהּ הַקָּטָן׃

טז וְאֵת עֹרֹת גְּדָיֵי הָעִזִּים הִלְבִּישָׁה עַל־יָדָיו וְעַל
חֶלְקַת צַוָּארָיו׃

יז וַתִּתֵּן אֶת־הַמַּטְעַמִּים וְאֶת־הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂתָה בְּיַד יַעֲקֹב בְּנָהּ׃

יח וַיָּבֹא אֶל־אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֻּנִי מִי
אַתָּה בְּנִי׃

[12] If my father touches me, I shall appear to him as a trickster and bring upon myself a curse, not a blessing."

[13] But his mother said to him, "Your curse, my son, be upon me! Just do as I say and go fetch them for me."

[14] He got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared a dish such as his father liked.

[15] Rebekah then took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were there in the house, and had her younger son Jacob put them on;

[16] and she covered his hands and the hairless part of his neck with the skins of the kids.

[17] Then she put in the hands of her son Jacob the dish and the bread that she had prepared.

[18] He went to his father and said, "Father." And he said, "Yes, which of my sons are you?"

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[12] **Perhaps my father will feel me,** not necessarily to discover my identity, but innocently, due to our physical proximity; **and I shall be in his eyes as a deceiver,** a trickster, as he will realize that I have disguised myself as Esau. **And** this is dangerous, as **I shall bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.** [13] **His mother said to him:** If you will be cursed, **your curse is upon me, my son.** This is a rhetorical expression of her acceptance of responsibility for the curse. **Only** in the meantime **heed my voice, and go, take** the goat kids **for me,** as I have commanded you. [14] **He went, and took** the kids, **and brought** them **to his mother,** as she requested; **and his mother made tasty food, such as his father liked.** [15] In response to the problem Jacob had raised, **Rebecca took the fine garments,** the best clothes, reserved for special occasions, **of Esau, her elder son, that were with her in the house, and she dressed Jacob, her younger son,** in them. [16] **The hides of the kids of the goats she placed** as sleeves **on his hands and on the smooth of his neck,** as these are the exposed areas of the body where the difference between the brothers is likely to be most noticeable. When the blind Isaac felt the hides, he would assume that it was Esau standing before him. [17] **She gave the tasty food and the bread that she prepared into the hand of Jacob her son.** [18] **He came to his father and said: My father. He,** Isaac, **said: Here I am; who are you, my son?** It is possible that the voices of the twins, Jacob and Esau, were very similar, and therefore Isaac would always ask this question upon their arrival.

יט וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יַעֲקֹב֙ אֶל־אָבִ֔יו אָנֹכִ֖י עֵשָׂ֣ו בְּכֹרֶ֑ךָ עָשִׂ֙יתִי֙ כַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר דִּבַּ֣רְתָּ אֵלָ֔י קוּם־נָ֥א שְׁבָ֖ה וְאָכְלָ֣ה מִצֵּידִ֑י בַּעֲב֕וּר תְּבָרְכַ֖נִי נַפְשֶֽׁךָ׃

[19] Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, your first-born; I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, that you may give me your innermost blessing."

כ וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יִצְחָק֙ אֶל־בְּנ֔וֹ מַה־זֶּ֥ה מִהַ֖רְתָּ לִמְצֹ֣א בְנִ֑י וַיֹּ֗אמֶר כִּ֤י הִקְרָה֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ לְפָנָֽי׃

[20] Isaac said to his son, "How did you succeed so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God granted me good fortune."

כא וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יִצְחָק֙ אֶל־יַעֲקֹ֔ב גְּשָׁה־נָּ֥א וַאֲמֻשְׁךָ֖ בְּנִ֑י הַאַתָּ֥ה זֶ֛ה בְּנִ֥י עֵשָׂ֖ו אִם־לֹֽא׃

[21] Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer that I may feel you, my son—whether you are really my son Esau or not."

כב וַיִּגַּ֤שׁ יַעֲקֹב֙ אֶל־יִצְחָ֣ק אָבִ֔יו וַיְמֻשֵּׁ֖הוּ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר הַקֹּ֤ל קוֹל֙ יַעֲקֹ֔ב וְהַיָּדַ֖יִם יְדֵ֥י עֵשָֽׂו׃

[22] So Jacob drew close to his father Isaac, who felt him and wondered. "The voice is the voice of Jacob, yet the hands are the hands of Esau."

כג וְלֹ֣א הִכִּירֹ֔ו כִּֽי־הָי֥וּ יָדָ֖יו כִּֽידֵ֣י עֵשָׂ֣ו אָחִ֑יו שְׂעִרֹ֣ת וְיָבָ֔רְכֵהוּ׃

[23] He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; and so he blessed him.

כד וַיֹּ֖אמֶר אַתָּ֣ה זֶ֔ה בְּנִ֥י עֵשָׂ֖ו וַיֹּ֥אמֶר אָֽנִי׃

[24] He asked, "Are you really my son Esau?" And when he said, "I am,"

כה וַיֹּ֗אמֶר הַגִּ֤שָׁה לִּי֙ וְאֹכְלָ֣ה מִצֵּ֣יד בְּנִ֔י לְמַ֗עַן תְּבָרֶכְךָ֙ נַפְשִׁ֔י וַיַּגֶּשׁ־לֹ֥ו וַיֹּאכַל֙ וַיָּ֣בֵא לֹ֔ו יַ֖יִן וַיֵּֽשְׁתְּ׃

[25] he said, "Serve me and let me eat of my son's game that I may give you my innermost blessing." So he served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[19] **Jacob said to his father: I am Esau your firstborn; I did as you spoke to me. Arise now, sit and eat from my game, so that your soul will bless me.** [20] Since Jacob did not go out hunting but simply took goat kids from the goat shed, he arrived sooner than his father had anticipated. Therefore, **Isaac said to his son: How is it that you hastened so to find it, my son?** According to my calculation, the hunt and the preparation of the dish should have taken longer. **He,** Jacob, **said: Because the Lord your God coordinated it,** the outcome, so that the game appeared **before me** without delay. [21] Sensing that something strange was going on, **Isaac said to Jacob: Please approach, that I may feel you, my son,** so that I will know: **Are you my son Esau or not?** Due to his faulty eyesight, Isaac was unable to tell the twins apart. [22] **Jacob approached Isaac his father, and he,** Isaac, **felt him. He said: The voice is the voice of Jacob,** as the subtleties of the voice bring to mind the voice of Jacob, **but the hands are the hands of Esau.** [23] **He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like the hands of his brother, Esau; and he blessed him.** Although Jacob's voice unnerved Isaac, his hands felt like those of Esau. Some say that Jacob's vocabulary was also identical to that of Esau. [24] **He said: Are you my son Esau?** Isaac sought further confirmation of his identity. **He said: I am.** [25] **He said,** in a somewhat ceremonial fashion: **Serve me, and I will eat from my son's game so that my soul will bless you. He served him, and he ate, and he brought him wine, and he drank.**

SELECTED RASHI

27:19 I AM ESAU THY FIRST-BORN — I am he that brings food to you, and Esau is your first-born.

27:19 I HAVE DONE many things at different times כאשר דברת אלי ACCORDING AS THOU SPAKEST UNTO ME

27:21 STEP NEAR, I PRAY THEE, THAT I MAY FEEL THEE — Isaac said to himself, "It is not Esau's way to mention the name of God so readily, and this one says, "Because the Lord thy God caused it thus to happen to me! קול יעקב (Genesis Rabbah 65:19).

27:24 AND HE SAID I AM — He did not say, "I am Esau", but "It is I".

כוַיֹּ֤אמֶר אֵלָיו֙ יִצְחָ֣ק אָבִ֔יו גְּשָׁה־נָּ֥א וּשְׁקָה־לִּ֖י בְּנִֽי׃

[26] Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come close and kiss me, my son”;

כזוַיִּגַּ֣שׁ וַיִּשַּׁק־לּ֑וֹ וַיָּ֗רַח אֶת־רֵ֙יחַ֙ בְּגָדָ֔יו וַיְבָרְכֵ֖הוּ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר רְאֵ֗ה רֵ֚יחַ בְּנִ֔י כְּרֵ֖יחַ שָׂדֶ֣ה אֲשֶׁר־בֵּרְכ֥וֹ יְהוָֽה׃

[27] and he went up and kissed him. And he smelled his clothes and he blessed him, saying, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of the fields that the LORD has blessed.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[26] After eating, Isaac’s spirits lifted, and he sensed a closeness to his son. And **Isaac his father said to him: Approach and kiss me, my son.** [27] **He**, Jacob, **approached and kissed him. He,** Isaac, **smelled the scent of his,** Esau’s, fine **garments,** which had absorbed the scent of one who frequents the fields, **and he blessed him and said: See, the scent of my son is as the scent of a field that the Lord blessed.** The Sages suggest that Isaac smelled the scent of an orchard, as a field of grain does not emit a pleasant fragrance, whereas one can smell the fruit in an area planted with trees.

SELECTED RASHI

27:27 וירח וגו׳ AND HE SMELLED etc.— Surely there is no more offensive smell than that of washed goat-skins! But Scripture implicitly tells us that the perfume of the Garden of Eden entered the room with him (Genesis Rabbah 65:22).

27:27 AS THE ODOUR OF A FIELD WHICH THE ETERNAL HATH BLESSED — to which God has given a pleasant perfume: it refers to a field of apple-trees. So have our Rabbis, of blessed memory, explained it (Taanit 29b).



THE READING · GENESIS 27:28–28:4

ששי

Sixth Aliyah

Esav comes back from his hunt with a dish of his own, and Yitzchak, trembling, realizes he has already blessed Yaakov and says the blessing must stand. Esav cries out bitterly and begs to be blessed too, and Yitzchak tells him he will live by his sword and serve his brother until he throws off his yoke. When Esav resolves in his heart to kill Yaakov once their father's mourning is over (27:41), Rivkah sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan, and Yitzchak blesses him with the blessing of Avraham and sends him to take a wife from his mother's family. AI SUMMARY

כח וְיִתֶּן־לְךָ֤ הָאֱלֹהִים֙ מִטַּ֣ל הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם וּמִשְׁמַנֵּ֖י
הָאָ֑רֶץ וְרֹ֥ב דָּגָ֖ן וְתִירֹֽשׁ׃

28 “May God give you Of the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, Abundance of new grain and wine.

כט יַֽעַבְדֻ֤וךָ עַמִּים֙ (וישתחו) [וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּ֣] לְךָ֔
לְאֻמִּ֖ים הֱוֵ֣ה גְבִ֣יר לְאַחֶ֑יךָ וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוּ֥ לְךָ֖ בְּנֵ֥י
אִמֶּ֛ךָ אֹרְרֶ֥יךָ אָר֖וּר וּמְבָרְכֶ֥יךָ בָּרֽוּךְ׃

29 Let peoples serve you, And nations bow to you; Be master over your brothers, And let your mother’s sons bow to you. Cursed be they who curse you, Blessed they who bless you.”

ל וַיְהִי֮ כַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר כִּלָּה֒ יִצְחָק֙ לְבָרֵ֣ךְ אֶת־יַעֲקֹ֔ב וַיְהִי֙
אַ֣ךְ יָצֹ֔א יָצָ֥א יַעֲקֹ֖ב מֵאֵ֣ת פְּנֵ֑י יִצְחָק֙ אָבִ֔יו
וְעֵשָׂ֥ו אָחִ֖יו בָּ֥א מִצֵּידֽוֹ׃

30 No sooner had Jacob left the presence of his father Isaac—after Isaac had finished blessing Jacob—than his brother Esau came back from his hunt.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

28 While smelling the scent of the blessed field in the present, Isaac blesses Jacob with successful fields throughout his life. **God will give you from the dew of the heavens, from the fat of the earth, and an abundance of grain and wine.** 29 From bread and wine, the blessing turns to the nation that will descend from Jacob. **Peoples will serve you, and nations will prostrate themselves to you. Be a lord** and leader **to your brethren,** conquer them, **and your mother’s sons will prostrate themselves to you. Cursed be one who curses you, and blessed be one that blesses you.** 30 **It was when Isaac concluded blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just departed from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came from his hunt.** Fortunately, Esau arrived only after Jacob had received the blessings and left the room.

SELECTED RASHI

27:28 GOD [GIVE THEE]—What denotes the use here of the Divine Name אלהים which signifies God in His attribute of Justice? May He act in justice! If you are worthy of it may He give it to you, and if not, let Him not give it to you. But to Esau he said, (Genesis 27:39) “The fat places of the earth shall be thy dwelling” —whether you be righteous or wicked He will give you this. From him (Isaac) did Solomon learn when he built the Temple how to compose his prayer (having in mind a similar idea): An Israelite who is a man of faith and acknowledges that God’s judgment is just will not reproach You;—therefore (1 Kings 8:39) “Render unto every man (Israelite; 1 Kings 8:38) according to his ways whose heart thou knowest”. A stranger, however, is lacking in faith; therefore Solomon said, (1 Kings 8:43) “Hear thou in heaven ... and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for — whether he be worthy or unworthy grant him his request in order that he may not reproach You. This explanation of האלהים is found in an old and correct text of Rashi.

לאוַיַּ֣עַשׂ גַּם־ה֗וּא מַטְעַמִּים֙ וַיָּבֵ֣א לְאָבִ֔יו וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לְאָבִ֔יו יָקֻ֥ם אָבִ֖י וְיֹאכַ֣ל מִצֵּ֣יד בְּנ֑וֹ בַּעֲב֕וּר תְּבָרְכַ֖נִי נַפְשֶֽׁךָ׃

31 He too prepared a dish and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that you may give me your innermost blessing."

לבוַיֹּ֤אמֶר לוֹ֙ יִצְחָ֣ק אָבִ֔יו מִי־אָ֖תָּה וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֲנִ֔י בִּנְךָ֥ בְכֹרְךָ֖ עֵשָֽׂו׃

32 His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, Esau, your first-born!"

לגוַיֶּחֱרַ֨ד יִצְחָ֥ק חֲרָדָ֛ה גְּדֹלָ֖ה עַד־מְאֹ֑ד וַיֹּ֗אמֶר מִי־אֵפ֣וֹא ה֤וּא הַצָּד־צַ֙יִד֙ וַיָּ֣בֵא לִ֔י וָאֹכַ֥ל מִכֹּ֖ל בְּטֶ֣רֶם תָּב֑וֹא וָאֲבָרְכֵ֕הוּ גַּם־בָּר֖וּךְ יִהְיֶֽה׃

33 Isaac was seized with very violent trembling. "Who was it then," he demanded, "that hunted game and brought it to me? Moreover, I ate of it before you came, and I blessed him; now he must remain blessed!"

לדכִּשְׁמֹ֤עַ עֵשָׂו֙ אֶת־דִּבְרֵ֣י אָבִ֔יו וַיִּצְעַ֥ק צְעָקָ֛ה גְּדֹלָ֥ה וּמָרָ֖ה עַד־מְאֹ֑ד וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לְאָבִ֗יו בָּרְכֵ֤נִי גַם־אֲנִי֙ אָבִ֔י׃

34 When Esau heard his father's words, he burst into wild and bitter sobbing, and said to his father, "Bless me too, Father!"

BERESHIT RABBAH 67:4 ONLINE AT TORAHFORM.COM Does G-d punish wrongdoing, or does He wait and collect later?

להוַיֹּ֤אמֶר בָּא֙ אָחִ֣יךָ בְּמִרְמָ֔ה וַיִּקַּ֖ח בִּרְכָתֶֽךָ׃

35 But he answered, "Your brother came with guile and took away your blessing."

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

31 **He,** Esau, **too made tasty food, and brought it to his father. He said to his father: Let my father arise, and eat from his son's game, so that your soul will bless me.** 32 **Isaac his father said to him: Who are you?** Isaac was confused by this second entrance. **He said: I am your son, your first-born, Esau.** 33 **Isaac was overcome with great trembling,** as he realized something terrible had occurred. **And he said: Who is it then who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate from** it **all before you came, and I blessed him; indeed, he shall be blessed.** I know that the blessing has taken effect. 34 **When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried a very great and bitter cry,** in disappointment, anger, and frustration. **And he said to his father: Bless me too, my father.** 35 **He,** Isaac, **said** to him: **Your brother came with deceit, and he took your blessing.** The blessing has already taken effect and I cannot retract it. What's done is done.

לוַיֹּ֣אמֶר הֲכִי֩ קָרָ֨א שְׁמ֜וֹ יַעֲקֹ֗ב וְיַעְקְבֵ֙נִי֙ זֶ֣ה פַּעֲמַ֔יִם אֶת־בְּכֹרָתִ֖י לָקָ֑ח וְהִנֵּ֥ה עַתָּ֛ה לָקַ֥ח בִּרְכָתִ֖י וַיֹּ֣אמֶר הֲלֹא־אָצַ֥לְתָּ לִּ֖י בְּרָכָֽה׃

36 [Esau] said, "Was he, then, named Jacob that he might supplant me these two times? First he took away my birthright and now he has taken away my blessing!" And he added, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

לזוַיַּ֤עַן יִצְחָק֙ וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לְעֵשָׂ֔ו הֵ֥ן גְּבִ֖יר שַׂמְתִּ֣יו לָ֑ךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־אֶחָ֞יו נָתַ֤תִּי לוֹ֙ לַעֲבָדִ֔ים וְדָגָ֥ן וְתִירֹ֖שׁ סְמַכְתִּ֑יו וּלְכָ֗ה אֵפ֛וֹא מָ֥ה אֶֽעֱשֶׂ֖ה בְּנִֽי׃

37 Isaac answered, saying to Esau, "But I have made him master over you: I have given him all his brothers for servants, and sustained him with grain and wine. What, then, can I still do for you, my son?"

לחוַיֹּ֤אמֶר עֵשָׂו֙ אֶל־אָבִ֔יו הֲבָרָכָ֥ה אַחַ֖ת הִוא־לָ֑ךְ אָבִ֕י בָּרְכֵ֥נִי גַם־אָ֖נִי אָבִ֑י וַיִּשָּׂ֥א עֵשָׂ֛ו קֹל֖וֹ וַיֵּֽבְךְּ׃

38 And Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, Father? Bless me too, Father!" And Esau wept aloud.

לטוַיַּ֤עַן יִצְחָק֙ אָבִ֔יו וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֵלָ֔יו הִנֵּ֛ה מִשְׁמַנֵּ֥י הָאָ֖רֶץ יִהְיֶ֣ה מוֹשָׁבֶ֑ךָ וּמִטַּ֥ל הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם מֵֽעָֽל׃

39 And his father Isaac answered, saying to him, "See, your abode shall enjoy the fat of the earth And the dew of heaven above.

מוְעַל־חַרְבְּךָ֥ תִחְיֶ֖ה וְאֶת־אָחִ֣יךָ תַּעֲבֹ֑ד וְהָיָה֙ כַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר תָּרִ֔יד וּפָרַקְתָּ֥ עֻלּ֖וֹ מֵעַ֥ל צַוָּארֶֽךָ׃

40 Yet by your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; But when you grow restive, You shall break his yoke from your neck."

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

36 **He,** Esau, **said** in anger: **Is it for this that his name was called Jacob [Ya'akov]?** Although Jacob was originally named for the manner in which he held on to Esau's heel [akev] at birth (see 25:26), and thus was born on his brother's heels, here Esau uses the same root in its meaning of deceit and cheating. **As he deceived me [vayakveni] these two times: He took my birthright,** as he purchased it from me with deception, **and behold, now he** also **took my blessing.** Having been told that Isaac cannot undo what he had done, **he said: Have you not reserved a blessing for me?** There must be some kind of blessing left for me. You could not have granted Jacob all possible blessings. 37 **Isaac answered and he said to Esau: Behold, I have made him a lord to you; I have given to him all his brethren as servants; and I have supported him with grain and wine;** I have blessed him that produce and wine should be easily available to him. **For you then, what shall I do, my son?** Since I am unable to negate his blessing, what blessing can I bestow upon you that will correspond to that which Jacob received? 38 **Esau said to his father: Have you but one blessing, my father?** There must be a blessing that does not conflict with the one you have already bestowed upon Jacob. **Bless me too, my father,** with some sort of blessing. **And** in his despair, **Esau raised his voice and wept.** 39 Ultimately, Isaac finds a way to bless his elder son as well. **And Isaac his father answered and said to him: Behold, from the fat of the earth shall be your dwelling,** you too shall inherit a fertile portion, **and from the dew of the heavens above.** 40 **By your sword you shall live.** Since you are not the firstborn, you do not enjoy full rights to your place of dwelling, and therefore you will constantly have to fight for it. **And you shall serve your brother. But it will be when you revolt** that you will free yourself from him, **and you will remove his yoke from your neck.** However, in the basic state of affairs, he will be the lord and you will be his slave.

SELECTED RASHI

27:36 IS IT BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN CALLED [JACOB]—This is a question, like (29:15) "Is it because (הכי) thou art my brother?" Perhaps that is why they have given him the name Jacob — in reference to what was to happen in the future — that he would some time or other supplant me (יעקבני)? (Tanchuma). Why did Isaac tremble? He thought: Perhaps I have sinned in blessing the younger before the elder, thus changing the order of relationship between them. But when Esau began to cry out, "for he hath supplanted me these two times", his father asked him, "What did he do to you?" He replied, "He took away my birthright". Isaac thereupon said, "It was on account of this that I was grieved and trembled: perhaps I had overstepped the line of strict justice. Now, however, I have really blessed the first-born — 'And he shall indeed be blessed'".

41 Now Esau harbored a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing which his father had given him, and Esau said to himself, “Let but the mourning period of my father come, and I will kill my brother Jacob.”

מא וַיִּשְׂטֹם עֵשָׂו אֶת־יַעֲקֹב עַל־הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר בֵּרְכוֹ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו בְּלִבּוֹ יִקְרְבוּ יְמֵי אֵבֶל אָבִי וְאַהַרְגָה אֶת־יַעֲקֹב אָחִי׃

42 When the words of her older son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you.

מב וַיֻּגַּד לְרִבְקָה אֶת־דִּבְרֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנָהּ הַגָּדֹל וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא לְיַעֲקֹב בְּנָהּ הַקָּטָן וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה עֵשָׂו אָחִיךָ מִתְנַחֵם לְךָ לְהָרְגֶךָ׃

43 Now, my son, listen to me. Flee at once to Haran, to my brother Laban.

מג וְעַתָּה בְנִי שְׁמַע בְּקֹלִי וְקוּם בְּרַח־לְךָ אֶל־לָבָן אָחִי חָרָנָה׃

44 Stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury subsides—

מד וְיָשַׁבְתָּ עִמּוֹ יָמִים אֲחָדִים עַד אֲשֶׁר־תָּשׁוּב חֲמַת אָחִיךָ׃

45 until your brother’s anger against you subsides—and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will fetch you from there. Let me not lose you both in one day!”

מה עַד־שׁוּב אַף־אָחִיךָ מִמְּךָ וְשָׁכַח אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ לּוֹ וְשָׁלַחְתִּי וּלְקַחְתִּיךָ מִשָּׁם לָמָּה אֶשְׁכַּל גַּם־שְׁנֵיכֶם יוֹם אֶחָד׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

41 **Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing that his father blessed him,** and for the results of that blessing. **Esau said in his heart: The days of mourning for my father will approach,** or my father will die, **and I will kill my brother Jacob.** Out of respect for his father, whom he accepted as a figure of authority, Esau would not dare to harm his brother while Isaac was still alive. 42 **The words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebecca; she sent and summoned Jacob her younger son and said to him: Behold, your brother Esau consoles himself in your regard to kill you.** He consoles himself with the thought that he will kill you. 43 **Now my son, heed my voice.** Just as you listened to me and took the blessing, which brought you into this problematic situation, you should once again obey me, this time in order to get you out of it. **And arise, flee to Laban my brother, to Haran,** where you can take refuge. 44 **Live with him a few years, until your brother’s anger subsides;** 45 **until your brother’s anger subsides from you, and he forgets that which you did to him,** and until the matter of the blessings ceases to bother him. Once I see that his anger has calmed, **I will send** a messenger **and take you from there,** Haran. If you do not leave and keep away, you are liable to fight and even kill each other. **Why should I be bereaved of both of you on one day?**

SELECTED RASHI

27:45 OF YOU BOTH — If he attacks you and you kill him his children will rise and kill you. The Holy Spirit poured itself forth upon her and she prophesied (had a presage) that they would both die on one day just as it is stated in the Chapter המקנה לאשתו (Sotah 13a).

46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am disgusted with my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries a Hittite woman like these, from among the native women, what good will life be to me?"

מו וַתֹּאמֶר רִבְקָה אֶל־יִצְחָק קַצְתִּי בְחַיַּי מִפְּנֵי בְּנוֹת חֵת אִם־לֹקֵחַ יַעֲקֹב אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת־חֵת כָּאֵלֶּה מִבְּנוֹת הָאָרֶץ לָמָּה לִי חַיִּים:

1 So Isaac sent for Jacob and blessed him. He instructed him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite women.

א וַיִּקְרָא יִצְחָק אֶל־יַעֲקֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ וַיְצַוֵּהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֹא־תִקַּח אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן:

2 Up, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take a wife there from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.

ב קוּם לֵךְ פַּדֶּנָה אֲרָם בֵּיתָה בְתוּאֵל אֲבִי אִמֶּךָ וְקַח־לְךָ מִשָּׁם אִשָּׁה מִבְּנוֹת לָבָן אֲחִי אִמֶּךָ:

3 May El Shaddai bless you, make you fertile and numerous, so that you become an assembly of peoples.

ג וְאֵל שַׁדַּי יְבָרֵךְ אֹתְךָ וְיַפְרְךָ וְיַרְבֶּךָ וְהָיִיתָ לִקְהַל עַמִּים:

4 May He grant the blessing of Abraham to you and your offspring, that you may possess the land where you are sojourning, which God assigned to Abraham."

ד וְיִתֶּן־לְךָ אֶת־בִּרְכַת אַבְרָהָם לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ אִתָּךְ לְרִשְׁתְּךָ אֶת־אֶרֶץ מְגֻרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְאַבְרָהָם:

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

46 Rebecca said to Isaac: I loathe my life, I am tired of life, **due to the daughters of Het,** whom Esau married (see 26:34–35). **If Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Het, like these, from the daughters of the land, why do I need life?** Rebecca hints to Isaac that he should suggest that Jacob follow his example and take a wife from his family who live far away, rather than from the local daughters of Het. **1** As a result of Rebecca's statement, or perhaps after arriving at this decision independently, **Isaac summoned Jacob. He blessed him, and he commanded him; he said to him: Do not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,** in the manner of your brother. **2 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Betuel, father of your mother, and take yourself a wife from there, from the daughters of Laban, brother of your mother.** Apparently Isaac knew that Laban had daughters, as some sort of contact was maintained between the families. **3** Isaac now bestows another blessing upon Jacob: **May God Almighty,** a name of God that expresses His might and His many deeds, **bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you; may you be an assembly of peoples,** meaning that your descendants will become a great nation; **4 may He give you the blessing of Abraham – to you, and to your descendants with you – to inherit the land of your residence, which God gave to Abraham.** With this statement, Isaac reaffirms the initial blessing he gave his younger son: Indeed, Jacob will inherit Abraham's legacy.



THE READING · GENESIS 28:5–9

שביעי

Seventh Aliyah

Yitzchak sends Yaakov to Paddan-aram to take a wife from the family of Lavan, and Esav, seeing that the Canaanite women displease his father, goes to Yishmael and takes Mahalath, Yishmael's daughter, as an additional wife. AI SUMMARY

5 Then Isaac sent Jacob off, and he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, mother of Jacob and Esau.

ה וַיִּשְׁלַ֥ח יִצְחָ֖ק אֶת־יַעֲקֹ֑ב וַיֵּ֣לֶךְ פַּדֶּ֔נָה אֲרָ֖ם
אֶל־לָבָ֞ן בֶּן־בְּתוּאֵ֤ל הָאֲרַמִּי֙ אֲחִ֣י רִבְקָ֔ה אֵ֖ם
יַעֲקֹ֥ב וְעֵשָֽׂו׃

6 When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him off to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, charging him, as he blessed him, “You shall not take a wife from among the Canaanite women,”

ו וַיַּ֣רְא עֵשָׂ֗ו כִּֽי־בֵרַ֤ךְ יִצְחָק֙ אֶת־יַעֲקֹ֔ב וְשִׁלַּ֥ח
אֹת֛וֹ פַּדֶּ֥נָה אֲרָ֖ם לָקַ֣חַת־לֹ֑ו מִשָּׁ֣ם אִשָּׁ֔ה בְּבָרְכֹ֥ו
אֹתֹ֖ו וַיְצַ֣ו עָלָ֑יו לֵאמֹ֗ר לֹֽא־תִקַּ֥ח אִשָּׁ֛ה מִבְּנ֥וֹת
כְּנָֽעַן׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

5 Isaac sent Jacob, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban, son of Betuel the Aramean, brother of Rebecca, mother of Jacob and Esau. 6 Esau saw that Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him to Padan Aram, to take himself a wife from there. In blessing him he commanded him, saying: Do not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

SELECTED RASHI

28:5 **MOTHER OF JACOB AND ESAU** — I do not know what the addition of these words is intended to tell us.



THE READING · GENESIS 28:7–9

מפטיר
Maftir

Maftir repeats the closing verses of the Seventh Aliyah. AI SUMMARY

ז וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אִמּוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ פַּדֶּנָה
אֲרָם:

7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and gone to Paddan-aram,

ח וַיַּרְא עֵשָׂו כִּי רָעוֹת בְּנוֹת כְּנָעַן בְּעֵינֵי יִצְחָק
אָבִיו:

8 Esau realized that the Canaanite women displeased his father Isaac.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

7 Jacob heeded his father and his mother, and he went to Padan Aram. 8 Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan were objectionable in the eyes of Isaac his father. Until this point, Esau thought that the main objection to his marrying women from Canaan came from his mother. It was only now that he realized how displeased his father was with his choice.

[9] So Esau went to Ishmael and took to wife, in addition to the wives he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, sister of Nebaioth.

ט וַיֵּלֶךְ עֵשָׂו אֶל־יִשְׁמָעֵאל וַיִּקַּח אֶת־מָחֲלַת | בַּת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אֲחוֹת נְבָיוֹת עַל־ נָשָׁיו לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[9] Therefore, **Esau went to** his uncle **Ishmael, and took Mahalat, the daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, sister of Nevayot,** Ishmael's firstborn, **in addition to his** previous **wives, as his wife.** In this manner, he too married his cousin, as was planned for Jacob.

SELECTED RASHI

28:9 THE SISTER OF NEBAIOTH — By a logical inference from what is stated that she was "the daughter of Ishmael" would I not know that she was the sister of Nebaioth? But the words are added to tell us that Ishmael died after he had betrothed her to Esau and before her marriage, and that her brother Nebaioth gave her away in marriage And we may learn, also, that Jacob was at that period sixty-three years old For Ishmael was seventy-four years old when Jacob was born — since Ishmael was fourteen years older than Isaac, and Isaac was sixty when they (Jacob and Esau) were born, making seventy-four and his (Ishmael's) years were one hundred and thirty seven — as it is said (25:17) "And these are the years of Ishmael etc." — consequently when Ishmael died Jacob was sixty-three years old. We learn from this that he (Jacob) concealed himself in Eber's School for fourteen years and only after that did he proceed to Haran. For before Joseph's birth he had stayed in Laban's house only fourteen years, as it is said (31:41) "I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters and six years for thy flock", and he received the sheep as wages only after Joseph was born, for it is said (30:25) "And it came to pass when Rachel had borne Joseph etc. [that Jacob wished to leave Laban and he agreed to remain with him on condition of receiving certain sheep as wages]. Now Joseph was thirty years old when he became ruler in Egypt, and from then until the time that Jacob came down to Egypt was nine years — seven of plenty and two of famine — and Jacob then said to Pharaoh (47:9), "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years". Go and calculate: the fourteen years he passed with Laban before Joseph's birth, and the thirty years of Joseph's life before he became ruler and the nine years from when he became ruler until the time that Jacob came to Egypt make fifty three years from the time he joined Laban until the time he came to Egypt But when he parted from his father he was sixty-three years old, as shown above, so that you have 116 years as his age when he came to Egypt, on the assumption that the fifty-three years he spent with Laban etc. began immediately after he had left his father. But he (Jacob) himself said to Pharaoh, "[I am] one hundred and thirty years". So you see that fourteen years are missing on this assumption. Thus you learn that after he had received the blessings he concealed himself in Eber' School for fourteen years (Megillah 17a). But he received no punishment for them (these fourteen years) on account of the merit of having studied the Torah in Eber's School during that period For Joseph was separated from his father only twenty-two years — that is, from the age of seventeen to that of thirty-nine - corresponding to the twenty-two years during which Jacob was separated from his father and could not perform the duty of honouring him (by actively attending to his needs), viz, the twenty years he spent in Laban's house and the two years he passed in travelling home - for it is written (33:17) with regard to his journey homewards, "And Jacob built him a house and made booths for his cattle", and our Rabbis, of blessed memory, inferred (Megillah 17a) from this verse that during his travels he passed eighteen months at Succoth, since a house means a dwelling for the rainy season, and "booths" means for the summer time. And this statement that the study of the Torah protects one from punishment fits in with the calculation which we made above, based upon the Sacred Text, regarding the period from when he left his father until the time when he went down to Egypt at the age of 130 years, where we found a surplus of 14 years, so that he must have been absent from his father for 36 years. But we may regard it as certain that when on his journey to Laban he concealed himself in Eber's house it was for the purpose of studying the Torah with him and that because of the merit of studying the Torah he received no punishment for them (those fourteen years) so that Joseph was separated from him only twenty-two years "measure for measure"(Megillah 17a). Thus far (beginning at "But he received no punishment") is found in an old Rashi text.



HAFTARAH · MALACHI 1:1-2:7

הפטרה

Haftarah

Malachi declares G-d's word to Israel: G-d says He has loved them, though they ask how, and reminds them that He chose Yaakov over Esav, whose land He made a desolation. He then rebukes the priests for offering defiled and blemished sacrifices on His altar, warns that He will curse their blessings and send them out with dung on their faces unless they honor His name, and affirms His covenant with Levi, whose lips guarded knowledge and who walked with Him in peace and uprightness. AI SUMMARY

א מַשָּׂא דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכִי׃

[1] A pronouncement: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.

ב אָהַבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמָּה אֲהַבְתָּנוּ הֲלוֹא־אָח עֵשָׂו לְיַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה וָאֹהַב אֶת־יַעֲקֹב׃

[2] I have shown you love, said the LORD. But you ask, “How have You shown us love?” After all—declares the LORD—Esau is Jacob’s brother; yet I have accepted Jacob

ג וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו שָׂנֵאתִי וָאָשִׂים אֶת־הָרָיו שְׁמָמָה וְאֶת־נַחֲלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְבָּר׃

[3] and have rejected Esau. I have made his hills a desolation, his territory a home for beasts of the desert.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[1] **The prophecy [massa] of the word of the Lord to Israel through** the prophet **Malachi.** Malachi refers to his prophecy using the term massa, literally a burden. This term suggests that prophets often experienced their prophesying as burdensome. [2] **I loved you, said the Lord, but you say: How have You loved us?** How can we discern Your love? God responds: **Wasn’t Esau a brother to Jacob? – the utterance of the Lord** – Esau and Jacob shared a brotherly bond from conception, as the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca, **and** yet **I loved Jacob.** [3] **But I hated Esau and I rendered his mountains a desolation and** rendered **his inheritance,** the land of Edom, a habitation **for the jackals of the wilderness.**

RASHI

1:1 The burden of the word of the Lord Porport in Old French, burden. A word delivered to Malachi to bear to the children of Israel.

1:1 in the hand of Malachi It was already delivered into his hand for many days. From here, our Sages expounded in a baraitha of Mechilta that all the prophets stood on Mount Sinai and there the prophecies were delivered to them, and so [Isaiah (48:16)] says: “From the time it was, there was I, and now, the Lord God has sent me, [and His spirit].”

1:2 And I loved Jacob And I gave him (Jer. 3:19) “a desirable land, an inheritance of the desire of hosts of nations”; a land that all the hosts of nations desire.

1:3 And I hated Esau to push him off to a land because of Jacob, his brother. Now it is customary in the world that, if one has two sons, he selects a beautiful portion for the firstborn.

1:3 and I made his mountains desolate They do not compare to the mountains of Israel.

1:3 for the jackals of the desert A den of jackals.

4 If Edom thinks, "Though crushed, we can build the ruins again," thus said the LORD of Hosts: They may build, but I will tear down. And so they shall be known as the region of wickedness, the people damned forever of the LORD.

ד כִּי־תֹאמַר אֱדוֹם רֻשַּׁשְׁנוּ וְנָשׁוּב וְנִבְנֶה
חֳרָבוֹת כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הֵמָּה יִבְנוּ וַאֲנִי
אֶהֱרוֹס וְקָרְאוּ לָהֶם גְּבוּל רִשְׁעָה וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר־
זָעַם יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם:

5 Your eyes shall behold it, and you shall declare, "Great is the LORD beyond the borders of Israel!"

ה וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּרְאֶינָה וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ יִגְדַּל יְהוָה
מֵעַל לִגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל:

6 A son should honor his father, and a slave his master. Now if I am a father, where is the honor due Me? And if I am a master, where is the reverence due Me?—said the LORD of Hosts to you, O priests who scorn My name. But you ask, "How have we scorned Your name?"

ו בֵּן יְכַבֵּד אָב וְעֶבֶד אֲדֹנָיו וְאִם־אָב אֲנִי אַיֵּה
כְבוֹדִי וְאִם־אֲדוֹנִים אָנִי אַיֵּה מוֹרָאִי אָמַר |
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם הַכֹּהֲנִים בּוֹזֵי שְׁמִי
וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה בָזִינוּ אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ:

7 You offer defiled food on My altar. But you ask, "How have we defiled You?" By saying, "The table of the LORD can be treated with scorn."

ז מַגִּישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל וַאֲמַרְתֶּם
בַּמֶּה גֵּאַלְנוּךָ בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחַן יְהוָה נִבְזֶה
הוּא:

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

4 **If** the population of **Edom will say: We are ruined, but we will return and build the ruins, so said the Lord of hosts: They will build, and I will destroy; they will be called the boundary,** the land, **of wickedness, and the people who the Lord rages against forever.** The people of Edom will fail in their attempts to restore their land, and it will remain cursed. 5 In contrast to the fate of the descendants of Esau, **your eyes will see** the downfall of your enemies, **and you will say: May the Lord be glorified** and honored **beyond the boundary of Israel.** 6 The prophet accuses the priests on God's behalf: **A son will honor his father, and a servant** respects and fears **his master.** This is the normal order of life. **If I am a father, where is My honor? If I am a master, where is My fear, the Lord of hosts says to you, the priests, scorners of My name** and belittlers of My honor. **And you say: How have we scorned Your name?** After all, we serve in the Temple and observe its laws. 7 The prophet cites God's response: **You present tainted bread on My altar, and you say: How have we tainted You,** Your bread? You have polluted it **in your saying: The table of the Lord is contemptible.** You treat the altar as a worthless item.

RASHI

1:4 Should Edom say, "We were poor" And if Edom says, "At first we were poor, but from now on we will be rich from the spoils of Jerusalem." but we will return and build the ruins Our ruins, so said the Lord, etc.

1:5 "The Lord is great beyond the border of Israel." He will show His greatness over our border, to make known that we are His people. And Jonathan rendered: May the glory of the Lord be magnified, and He has widened the border of Israel.

1:6 A son is required to honor his father, and so a slave his master and you are called sons and slaves. Now, if I am your father, where is My honor?

1:6 says the Lord of Hosts to you You, the priests who despise My Name.

1:6 But you said, "How have we despised" I knew that you would say, "How have we despised?" This is the contempt [as follows:]

1:7 You offer on My altar, etc., yet you say And if you say. "How have we defiled You?" How have we defiled for You the bread of Your altar? I reply to you that, in this manner you have defiled Me. By your saying, "God's table is contemptible." They would look with contempt on sharing equally the meal offerings and the hallowed foods, and they would say, "Since we may not share a meal offering for a meal offering, or a sacrifice for a sacrifice, it is too much bother and toil to divide each meal offering for the olive-sized piece or the bean-sized piece that is apportioned to each one."

הפטרה

ח וְכִי־תַגִּישׁוּן עִוֵּר לִזְבֹּחַ אֵין רָע וְכִי תַגִּישׁוּ
פִּסֵּחַ וְחֹלֶה אֵין רָע הַקְרִיבֵהוּ נָא לְפֶחָתֶךָ
הֲיִרְצְךָ֖ אוֹ הֲיִשָּׂ֣א פָנֶ֑יךָ אָמַ֖ר יְהוָ֥ה צְבָאֽוֹת׃

ט וְעַתָּה חַלּוּ־נָא פְנֵי־אֵל וְיחָנֵּנוּ מִיֶּדְכֶם הָיְתָה
זֹּאת הֲיִשָּׂ֥א מִכֶּ֛ם פָּנִ֖ים אָמַ֣ר יְהוָ֑ה צְבָאֽוֹת׃

י מִי גַם־בָּכֶם וְיִסְגֹּר דְּלָתַיִם וְלֹא־תָאִירוּ מִזְבְּחִי
חִנָּם אֵין־לִי חֵפֶץ בָּכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
וּמִנְחָה לֹא־אֶרְצֶה מִיֶּדְכֶם׃

8 When you present a blind animal for sacrifice —it doesn't matter! When you present a lame or sick one—it doesn't matter! Just offer it to your governor: Will he accept you? Will he show you favor?—said the LORD of Hosts.

9 And now implore the favor of God! Will He be gracious to us? This is what you have done—will He accept any of you? The LORD of Hosts has said:

10 If only you would lock My doors, and not kindle fire on My altar to no purpose! I take no pleasure in you—said the LORD of Hosts—and I will accept no offering from you.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

8 **When you present a blind animal for sacrifice, is nothing wrong? When you present the lame and ill, is nothing wrong? Present it now to your governor.** Try to offer such a blemished animal to your ruler of flesh and blood; **will he be pleased with you, or will he show you favor? – said the Lord of hosts.** 9 Malachi tells the priests: **Now, please implore God** that He accept your gifts, so **that He** may **be gracious to us** by exercising mercy, or by bestowing a blessing upon us. **This** offering of blemished animals **was from your hand; will He show any of you favor? said the Lord of hosts.** 10 **If only there were even one among you who would** rise and **shut the doors** of the Temple, **so you would not kindle My altar in vain. I have no desire for you, said the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.**

RASHI

1:8 is there nothing wrong? Is this thing not bad?

1:9 And now, will you pray before the Lord? And now, you priests, who commit this evil, how does it enter your mind that you can be the messengers of Israel, to supplicate God to have compassion on them? Lo, this evil has come from your hand.

1:9 Will He favor any of you to hearken to a prayer from your mouth, and to favor those who sent you?

1:10 O that there were even one among you that would close the doors If only a good man would arise among you who would close the doors of My sanctuary so as not to allow this abominable sacrifice there.

1:10 and that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain with fire offerings with which I am not placated, for I have no desire in you. And our Sages expounded in Torath Kohanim (7: 154): If a person says to his friend, "Close this door for me," he does not demand compensation for it; [or if he says,] "Light this candle for me," he does not request compensation for it. But you - who is there among you who closed My doors, gratis? Neither did you kindle fire on My altar gratis. Surely, things that are customarily done for compensation you did not do gratis. Therefore, I have no desire in you.

הפטרה

יא כִּי מִמִּזְרַח־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְעַד־מְבוֹאוֹ גָּדוֹל שְׁמִי
בַּגּוֹיִם וּבְכָל־מָקוֹם מֻקְטָר מֻגָּשׁ לִשְׁמִי
וּמִנְחָה טְהוֹרָה כִּי־גָדוֹל שְׁמִי בַּגּוֹיִם אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

יב וְאַתֶּם מְחַלְּלִים אוֹתוֹ בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחַן אֲדֹנָי
מְגֹאָל הוּא וְנִיבוֹ נִבְזֶה אָכְלוֹ:

יג וַאֲמַרְתֶּם הִנֵּה מַתְּלָאָה וְהִפַּחְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וַהֲבֵאתֶם גָּזוּל וְאֶת־הַפִּסֵּחַ וְאֶת־
הַחוֹלָה וַהֲבֵאתֶם אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הַאֶרְצֶה אוֹתָהּ
מִיֶּדְכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה:

11 For from where the sun rises to where it sets, My name is honored among the nations, and everywhere incense and pure oblation are offered to My name; for My name is honored among the nations—said the LORD of Hosts.

12 But you profane it when you say, "The table of the Lord is defiled and the meat, the food, can be treated with scorn."

13 You say, "Oh, what a bother!" And so you degrade it—said the LORD of Hosts—and you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; and you offer such as an oblation. Will I accept it from you?—said the LORD.

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

11 **For from the rising of the sun to its setting,** across the entire world, **My name is great among the nations, and in every place, burnt offerings and pure meal offerings are presented to My name, for My name is great among the nations.** They know that I am the God of gods, **said the Lord of hosts.** 12 **But you profane it,** My name, **in your saying: The table of the Lord,** the altar, **is tainted, and its fruit [nivo] is contemptible, as is its food.** According to Rashi, nivo refers to the priests' speech [niv] about the altar, as they refer to the altar's food as contemptible. God declares: Unlike the gentiles, who offer pure meal offerings in My name, you, who are My beloved, defile My bread. 13 **You** also **say** with regard to the offering: **Behold, this is bothersome** to bring an offering. Alternatively, behold, even this defective and weak animal is fit for the altar. **And you disappointed Him – the utterance of the Lord of hosts.** Out of respect for God, the prophet refers to God in the third person, even though he is transmitting the statement of God. **And you brought the stolen, and the lame, and the ill, and you brought the** blemished **offering; should I accept it from your hand? said the Lord.**

RASHI

1:11 My Name is great among the nations Our Sages stated (Men. 110a): For they call Him the God of the gods. Even one who has an idol knows that He is the God Who is over all of them - and everywhere they donate in My Name. Our Sages, however, explained: These are the Torah scholars who are engaged in the laws of the Temple service everywhere, and likewise, every prayer of Israel that they pray anywhere is to Me as a pure oblation. And so did Jonathan paraphrase: And every time that you do My will, I accept your prayer, and My great Name is sanctified through you, and your prayer is like a pure offering before Me. This is the explanation of the verse: Now why do you profane My Name? Is it not great among the nations? As for Me, My love and My affection are upon you wherever you pray before Me, and even in exile, [offerings are] burnt and offered up to My Name.

1:11 yea, a pure oblation it is to Me, for through you My Name is feared among the nations. Yet you profane Me and My Name.

1:12 and its expression is "Its food is contemptible." The expression of the altar that is fluent on your lips is always, "Its food is contemptible"; that [is all] you say about it. You have already spread this slander, and you have strongly attached this expression to My altar.

1:12 its food its food.

1:13 And you say, "Here is a weary one" An emaciated animal, and we are poor and cannot afford the choicest for [our] vows. So did Jonathan render: This is what we have brought from our toil.

1:13 and you cause it pain This is one of the eighteen words [in all of Scripture known as] the emendations of the scribes. וְהִפַּחְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ should have been written: אוֹתִי, and you cause Me pain. Scripture, however, euphemized, writing אוֹתוֹ it. and you cause pain and you cause pain, an expression of despair (Job 11: 20).

1:13 it My table.

14 A curse on the cheat who has an [unblemished] male in his flock, but for his vow sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord! For I am a great King—said the LORD of Hosts—and My name is revered among the nations.

יד וְאָרוּר נוֹכֵל וְיֵשׁ בְּעֶדְרוֹ זָכָר וְנֹדֵר וְזֹבֵחַ מָשְׁחָת לַאדֹנָי כִּי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אָנִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּשְׁמִי נוֹרָא בַגּוֹיִם:

1 And now, O priests, this charge is for you:

א וְעַתָּה אֲלֵיכֶם הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת הַכֹּהֲנִים:

2 Unless you obey and unless you lay it to heart, and do honor to My name—said the LORD of Hosts—I will send a curse and turn your blessings into curses. (Indeed, I have turned them into curses, because you do not lay it to heart.)

ב אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ וְאִם־לֹא תָשִׂימוּ עַל־לֵב לָתֵת כָּבוֹד לִשְׁמִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם אֶת־הַמְּאֵרָה וְאָרוֹתִי אֶת־בִּרְכוֹתֵיכֶם וְגַם אֲרוֹתִיהָ כִּי אֵינְכֶם שָׂמִים עַל־לֵב:

3 I will put your seed under a ban, and I will strew dung upon your faces, the dung of your festal sacrifices, and you shall be carried out to its [heap].

ג הִנְנִי גֹעֵר לָכֶם אֶת־הַזֶּרַע וְזֵרִיתִי פֶרֶשׁ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם פֶּרֶשׁ חַגֵּיכֶם וְנָשָׂא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו:

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

14 **Cursed is the scoundrel who has a ram in his flock, and vows** to bring an offering, as if to indicate that he is a generous and righteous person, **and** yet when he fulfills his vow, he **slaughters the blemished** animal **to the Lord**. Such an individual is cursed, for he has shown disdain for Me, **as I am a great King, said the Lord of hosts, and My name is awesome among the nations.** 1 **And now, this commandment** of respect for the Temple service **is to you, the priests.** 2 **If you will not heed, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name, said the Lord of hosts, I will send among you the curse, and I will curse your blessings,** your successes and your crops: I will transform the earlier blessings You received from Me into curses, or: I will curse the blessings for which you pray, or the blessings with which you bless the people, the priestly benediction. **I also cursed it** already, **because you do not take it to heart.** 3 **Behold, I berate the seed,** I will curse it so that it does not sprout **for you. And I will scatter dung on your faces, the dung** of the offerings **of your festivals, and it,** the dung, a reference to sin or the enemy, **will carry you to it,** to be as disgusting and wretched as the dung itself. The blessing, grace, and divine favor expressed in the priestly benediction will become a curse, and you will be distanced from Me due to your deeds.

RASHI

1:14 he who deals craftily Plots deceitfully, with guile, before Me, saying, "I have none better than this."

1:14 a ram a ram fit for a burnt offering;

1:14 and he vows and sacrifices a blemished one as in (Lev. 22:25), "their corruption is in them; a blemish is in them."

2:1 to you, etc., O priests I charge you with this commandment, that you shall not sacrifice these on My altar.

2:2 and I will curse And I will curse your blessings; how I should bless the grain, the wine, and the oil for you.

2:2 Indeed I have [already] cursed it Indeed, it is unnecessary to have the matter depend on the condition upon which I made it depend: if they do not obey. For I know that you will not obey. Therefore, I have already cursed it - from now.

2:3 and I will scatter dung of the animals of your festive sacrifices; that is to say, you will not receive reward from Me, but [you will receive a curse] for harm and shame. And I will rebuke the seed of the field because of you.

2:3 and it shall take you to itself The dung of your sacrificial animals will take you to itself to [make you] cheap and despised, as it is.

4 Know, then, that I have sent this charge to you that My covenant with Levi may endure—said the LORD of Hosts.

ד וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לִהְיוֹת בְּרִיתִי אֶת־לֵוִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

5 I had with him a covenant of life and well-being, which I gave to him, and of reverence, which he showed Me. For he stood in awe of My name.

ה בְּרִיתִי | הָיְתָה אִתּוֹ הַחַיִּים וְהַשָּׁלוֹם וָאֶתְּנָם־לוֹ מוֹרָא וַיִּירָאֵנִי וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁמִי נִחַת הוּא׃

6 Proper rulings were in his mouth, And nothing perverse was on his lips; He served Me with complete loyalty And held the many back from iniquity.

ו תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הָיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ וְעַוְלָה לֹא־נִמְצָא בִשְׂפָתָיו בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הָלַךְ אִתִּי וְרַבִּים הֵשִׁיב מֵעָוֹן׃

7 For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, And men seek rulings from his mouth; For he is a messenger of the LORD of Hosts.

ז כִּי־שִׂפְתֵי כֹהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ־דַעַת וְתוֹרָה יְבַקְשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ כִּי מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה־צְבָאוֹת הוּא׃

THE STEINSALTZ TANAKH

[4] **You shall** thereby **know that I sent this commandment to you, so that My covenant will be** upheld **with** the tribe of **Levi, said the Lord of hosts.** [5] **My covenant was with him,** the house of Levi, a covenant of **life and peace;** these blessings are contingent on the priests' adherence to their responsibilities. **And I gave it,** the covenant and its assurances, **to him,** the tribe of Levi, so that it should accept them **in fear** of God, **and he** indeed **feared Me, and due to My name, he was intimidated.** [6] **The Torah of truth was in his mouth.** The Levites would teach the people Torah and justice. **And injustice was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and honesty, and he returned many from iniquity.** [7] **For the lips of the priest will safeguard knowledge.** A priest is tasked with safeguarding the Torah, **and they,** the people, **will seek Torah from his mouth, as he is a messenger of the Lord of hosts.**

RASHI

2:4 that My covenant be with Levi for I wish that you will exist with Me with the covenant that I formed for the tribe of Levi.

2:5 life and peace As it was said to Phinehas (Num. 25:12): "My covenant of peace"; and it was promised to him and to his seed after him, thus indicating that his seed will be alive.

2:5 and I gave them to him that he accept them with fear, and so he did, and he feared Me.

2:5 he was over-awed an expression of חִתַּת, fear; he was afraid.

2:6 In peace and equity he went with Me Aaron, Eleazar, and Phinehas and so in the episode of the calf, they brought back all their tribe from iniquity, as it is said (Ex. 32:26), "all the children of Levi gathered to him."

2:7 For a priest's lips It is incumbent upon them to guard knowledge. Why? Because... teaching should be sought from his mouth This matter has already (Deut. 33:10) been delivered to them. "They shall teach Your judgments to Jacob."

2:7 for he is a messenger the agent of the Holy One, blessed be He; like the ministering angels, to serve Him and to enter into His compartment. [I.e., into the place where God's presence is manifest.]



מדרש

Midrash

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BERESHIT RABBAH 63:10 · ON GENESIS 25:27 36

Why did two brothers raised together turn out so differently?

BERESHIT RABBAH 63:6 · ON GENESIS 25:22 37

Why did Rivkah's twins struggle within her womb?

ON GENESIS 25:27

Why did two brothers raised together turn out so differently?

Bereshit Rabbah 63:10

Drawing on Rabbi Levi's parable of a myrtle and a thorn bush growing side by side, the midrash describes how Esav and Yaakov shared the same upbringing until age thirteen, when one turned toward the study hall and the other toward idolatry, and Rabbi Elazar adds that a father is responsible for his son only until that age. Reading "Esau was a man who knows hunting" through Rabbi Abahu and Rabbi Chiya, the midrash takes Esav's hunting to mean that he ensnared people with his speech and gave himself over like a field, and it cites Jeremiah 49:22 to show that G-d will repay Edom in kind for mistreating Israel. Yaakov's "dweller in tents" is read as two tents, the study halls of Shem and Ever, and Rivkah's love for Yaakov is said to grow each time she hears his voice. AI SUMMARY

“The lads grew; Esau was a man who knows hunting, a man of the field; Jacob was a simple man, a dweller in tents” (Genesis 25:27). “The lads grew” – Rabbi Levi said: This is analogous to a myrtle and a thorn bush that grew adjacent to one another. When they grew and blossomed, this one produced its fragrance and that one produced its thorns.

So, all thirteen years, both of them would go to school and both of them would come from school. After thirteen years, this one would go to study halls, and that one would go to houses of idol worship. Rabbi Elazar said: A person must be responsible for his son until age thirteen. From there on, he must say: ‘Blessed that He has absolved me from the punishment of this one.’

“Esau was a man who knows hunting [tzayid]” – he would ensnare [tzad] people with his mouth. You [say you] did not steal; who stole with you? You [say you] did not kill, who killed with you? Rabbi Abahu said: He was a field person, a hunting person. He hunted in the house and hunted in the field. In the house, [he said]: ‘How does one prepare salt?’ In the field, [he said:] ‘How does one prepare straw?’

Rabbi Ḥiyya said: He abandoned himself like a field. Israel said before the Holy One blessed be He: ‘Master of the universe, is it not enough that you subjugated us to seventy nations, but even to this one, that engages in relations like a woman?’ The Holy One blessed be He said to them: ‘I, too, will exact retribution against him with that expression.’ That is what is written: “The heart of the valiant of Edom will be on that day like the heart of a woman in anguish” (Jeremiah 49:22).

“Jacob was a simple man, a dweller in tents” – two tents; the study hall of Shem, and the study hall of Ever. “Isaac loved Esau because of the game in his mouth, and Rebecca loved Jacob” (Genesis 25:28). “Isaac loved Esau because of the game in his mouth” – good meat for his mouth and a good cup for his mouth.

“And Rebecca loved Jacob” – the more she would hear his voice, the more she would add love onto her love for him.

ON GENESIS 25:22

Why did Rivkah's twins struggle within her womb?

Bereshit Rabbah 63:6

The midrash on Genesis 25:22 reads the struggle of the twins in Rivkah's womb as active hostility. Rabbi Yochanan understands each brother as running to kill the other, while Reish Lakish reads it as each one nullifying the other's commandments, and Rabbi Berekhya, in the name of Rabbi Levi, adds that Esav's fist was already outstretched in the womb. Rabbi Yitzchak's account of Rivkah's distress, and the teaching of Rabbi Nechemya that she was worthy of bearing twelve tribes, frame her anguish as a prelude to that destiny, and the midrash closes by teaching that whoever honors a Torah scholar honors the Shechinah (the Divine Presence). AI SUMMARY

"The children were agitated within her, and she said: If this is so, why do I exist? She went to inquire of the Lord" (Genesis 25:22). "The children were agitated [vayitrotzetzu] within her" – Rabbi Yoḥanan and Reish Lakish, Rabbi Yoḥanan said: This one ran [ratz] to kill that one and that one ran to kill this one. Reish Lakish said: This one permitted the command of [matir tzivuyo] that one, and that one permitted the command of this one. Rabbi Berekhya in the name of Rabbi Levi: So that you will not say that it was after he [Esau] emerged from his mother's womb that he confronted him, but rather, while he was still in his mother's womb, his fist [zirte] was outstretched toward him. That is what is written: "The wicked are corrupt [zoru] from the womb" (Psalms 58:4).

"The children were agitated within her" – when she would stand adjacent to synagogues and study halls, Jacob would convulse to emerge. That is what is written: "Before I formed you in the belly I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). When she would pass houses of idol worship, Esau would run and convulse to emerge. That is what is written: "The wicked are corrupt from the womb."

"The Lord said to her: Two peoples are in your womb, and two nations will be separated from your innards; one nation will prevail over the other nation, and the elder will serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). "Her days to give birth were complete, and behold, there were twins in her womb" (Genesis 25:24). "The first emerged ruddy, all of him like a cloak of hair, and they called his name Esau" (Genesis 25:25). "Then his brother emerged, his hand grasping Esau's heel, and he called his name Jacob. And Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them" (Genesis 25:26).

"She said: If this is so, why do I exist [lama zeh anokhi]?" Rabbi Yitzḥak said: It teaches that our matriarch Rebecca was circulating around the entrances of women's houses and saying to them: 'In your days, did you experience this suffering? If this is the suffering that comes with children; had I only not conceived.' Rav Huna said: [She said:] 'If this is how I am destined to produce twelve tribes, would I only not conceive the numerical value of zeh.'

It is taught in the name of Rabbi Neḥemya: Rebecca was worthy to have twelve tribes emerge from her. That is what is written: "The Lord said to her: Two peoples are in your womb" – these are two; "and two nations" – that is four; "and one nation will prevail over the other nation" – that is six; "and the elder will serve the younger" – that is eight. "Her days to give birth were complete" – that is ten. "The first emerged ruddy" – that is eleven; "then his brother emerged" – that is twelve. There are some who derive it from this verse: "She said: If this is so, why do I exist [lama zeh anokhi]?" Zayin – seven, heh – 5, that is twelve, the numerical value of zeh.

"She went to inquire of the Lord" (Genesis 25:22) – were there synagogues and study halls in those days? Did she not go only to the academy of Shem and

Ever? It is, rather, to teach you that anyone who enters before a Torah scholar, it is as though he enters before the Divine Presence.

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4 chosen for the booklet

GENESIS 26:20 · RAMBAN
Why does the Torah dwell on Yitzchak's three wells? 40

RAMBAN · GENESIS 25:22
Why did Rivkah wish she had never been born? 41

SFORNO · GENESIS 25:28
Why Yitzchak favored Esav but Rivkah favored Yaakov 42

RAMBAN · GENESIS 26:5
Did Avraham keep the Torah before it was given at Sinai? 43

RAMBAN

Why does the Torah dwell on Yitzchak's three wells?

Genesis 26:20

Ramban reads the three wells of Yitzchak as a prophecy about the three Temples, with the names Esek (Contention) and Sitnah (Enmity) pointing to the First and Second Houses, each marked by hostility from the surrounding nations, and Rechovot (Spacious) pointing to a future Temple built without strife. He grounds his reading in other verses, such as "A fountain of living waters," and in a prophecy of the future Temple's breadth, rather than in the plain sense of the narrative, which he notes would otherwise seem to offer little benefit to Yitzchak. AI SUMMARY

"the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." He named that well Esek, because they contended with him."

AND HE CALLED THE NAME OF THE WELL ESEK. — Scripture gives a lengthy account of the matter of the wells when in the literal interpretation of the story there would seem to be no benefit nor any great honor to Isaac in that he and his father did the identical thing.

However, there is a hidden matter involved here since Scripture's purpose is to make known a future matter. A well of living water alludes to the House of G-d which the children of Isaac will build. This is why Scripture mentions a well of living waters, even as it says, A fountain of living waters, the Eternal.

He called the first well Esek (Contention), which is an allusion to the First House, concerning which the nations contended with us and instigated quarrels and wars with us until they destroyed it. The second well he called Sitnah (Enmity), a name harsher than the first. This alludes to the Second House, which has indeed been referred to by this very name, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote 'sitnah' against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And during its entire existence they were a source of enmity unto us until they destroyed it and drove us from it into bitter exile.

The third well he called Rechovoth (Spacious). This is a reference to the Future House, which will be speedily built in our days, and it will be done without quarrel and feud, and G-d will enlarge our borders, even as it says, And if the Eternal thy G-d enlarge thy border, as He hath sworn, etc., which refers to the future. And concerning the Third House of the future it is written, Broader and winding about higher and higher.

[The concluding statement in the present narrative, concerning the naming of the third well], And we shall be fruitful in the land, signifies that all peoples will come to worship G-d with one consent.

RAMBAN

Why did Rivkah wish she had never been born?

Genesis 25:22

Ibn Ezra reads Rivkah's cry as a question about whether she should have been born at all, since the struggle in her womb is so severe that she wishes she had never existed. Drawing on Rashi, Ramban rejects the reading that she was regretting her prayer for a child, and he also rejects Ibn Ezra's view that she asked other women whether their pregnancies were similar, arguing that this reading leaves the verse incomplete. Instead, Ramban holds that her cry expresses a wish for non-existence, and he connects it to the verse "I should have been as though I had not been," while also explaining that her inquiry of G-d was a request for prayer, drawing on other verses that use the same verb. AI SUMMARY

“But the children struggled in her womb, and she said, “If so, why do I exist?” She went to inquire of the LORD,”

AND SHE SAID: IF IT BE SO, — ‘LAMAH ZEH ANOCHI?’”If the pain of pregnancy is so great, lamah zeh anochi (why did I) pray for and aspire to pregnancy?” Thus Rashi. But it is not correct. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra says that she asked the women if they had experienced such pains, and they said, “No,” whereupon she said, “If the matter and custom of pregnancy be as they said, lamah zeh anochi, why am I beset with an unusual pregnancy?” Now according to this exposition, the verse is missing and not complete. The correct interpretation in my opinion is that she said, “If it shall be so with me, lamah zeh anochi, [why am I in the world]? Would that I did not exist, that I should die or never have come into existence.” This is similar to the verse, I should have been as though I had not been.

AND SHE WENT — ‘LIDROSH’ (TO INQUIRE) OF THE ETERNAL. Rashi comments: “To tell what her outcome will be.” Now I have not discovered the word drishah [lidrosh, to inquire] in relation to G-d except in the context of prayer, as in the verses: I sought (‘darashti’) the Eternal and He answered me; seek ye Me, (‘dirshuni’) and live; As I live, saith G-d the Eternal, I will not be inquired of (‘edareish’) by you.

IBN EZRA, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED TOGETHER. — Va-yitrotzatzu (and they struggled) comes from the word that means running. The tzadi is doubled. Its parallel is found in They run to and fro (yerotzetzu) like the lightnings (Nahum 2:5). The Bible refers to the fetuses as children because that is what they ultimately became. And stripped the naked of their clothing (Job 22:6) is similar. Rebekah asked women who had children if they had had a similar experience. They responded that they did not.

Rebekah then said, if it, namely, the manner and custom of pregnancy, be so as they said, wherefore do I undergo such an abnormal pregnancy.

SFORNO

Why Yitzchak favored Esav but Rivkah favored Yaakov

Genesis 25:28

Sforno holds that Yitzchak loved Esav not merely as an afterthought to his love for Yaakov, and that Yitzchak's affection was rooted in Esav's venison and his father's own aging and shrinking world, while Radak's account turns on Rivkah, who alone loved Yaakov because she recognized Esav's wickedness. Drawing on the Midrash, the Radak's contrast between the two parents' motives shows that Rivkah's love is spiritual and exclusive, while Yitzchak's is tied to the physical provision Esav brought him. AI SUMMARY

"Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob."

ויאהב יצחק את עשו — also Esau, not only Yaakov, even though he must have been aware that Esau was far less perfect than Yaakov.

ורבקה אוהבת את יעקב — she only loved Yaakov, recognising the wickedness of Esau.

RADAK, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

ויאהב — there was no need to mention that Yitzchok loved Yaakov; clearly his love for Yaakov was constantly on the increase seeing that Yaakov was righteous, etc. Esau's claim to his father's love was due only to the venison he brought his father from his hunting expeditions.

בפיו — This meat was especially tasty. Moreover Yitzchok was already aged, being more than seventy years old, Clearly, unless Esau had been at least 12 years old at the time he would not have known how to hunt with bow and arrow.

ורבקה אוהבת את יעקב — exclusively; the reason was that Yaakov pursued a lifestyle that would lead to eternal life, whereas Esau did the opposite. Not only did he not lead a life leading to eternal life after death, but he actively forfeited even life on earth, exposing himself to needless dangers. Seeing that Yitzchok was aging and sitting at home most of the time, he was not aware of Esau's doings and was easily led to believe that Esau led a virtuous life, basing his belief on the daily supply of venison his son provided for him. The story unfolds at a time when Yitzchok was already incapable of seeing well with his physical eyes. The story of the sale of the birthright is told primarily to illustrate the disdain with which Esau looked upon spiritual values as a valuable acquisition, something guaranteeing a person life beyond death.

RAMBAN

Did Avraham keep the Torah before it was given at Sinai?

Genesis 26:5

Ramban holds that Avraham observed the entire Torah, including its details and the reasons for its commandments, before it was given at Sinai, having learned it through Ruach Hakodesh, and that this observance applied only in the Land of Israel. He builds on the Midrash and on Rashi's reading of the verse's terms as including the Oral Law and the laws given to Moshe at Sinai, which he uses to explain how Yaakov and Amram could marry relatives outside the Land. Rashbam, by contrast, does not read the three terms as the whole Torah. He ties them to specific events in Avraham's life, such as the binding of Yitzchak and circumcision, and to the basic laws known to humanity before Sinai, which he says were renewed and elaborated at the giving of the Torah. AI SUMMARY

"inasmuch as Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge: My commandments, My laws, and My teachings.""

AND HE KEPT MY CHARGE. — Rashi comments: "As a reward that Abraham hearkened to My voice when I tested him. And he kept My charge — these are the precautionary decrees instituted by the Sages, which are intended to make us avoid the violation of Biblical laws, such as Second Degrees of forbidden marriages and certain prohibited acts on the Sabbath. My commandments — these are precepts which, had they not been written in the Torah, were requisite to have been written, such as robbery and murder. My statutes — these are matters against which the evil inclination and the heathen nations argue, such as the prohibitions against eating the swine and the wearing of garments woven of wool and linen, there being no apparent rationale for them except that they are decrees of the King imposed on His subjects. And My laws — the plural is intended to include, [besides the Written Law], the Oral Law as well as those rules given to Moses from Sinai." [Thus far the words of Rashi.

] Now if so, all this interpretation is posited on the opinion that Abraham fulfilled and observed the Torah before it was given on Sinai. This is indeed what the Sages of the Midrash said in connection with the verse, And Joseph gave them 'agaloth' (wagons), thereby indicating to his father that when he left him they were studying the section dealing with Eglah Arufah. Thus Joseph occupied himself with Torah just as his fathers did. Though the Torah had not yet been given, it is still written of Abraham, And he kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws. There the Sages also said that Abraham observed the details of the Torah, which he taught to his children, etc.

The question presents itself: If it be the case [that the laws of the Torah were observed by our ancestors before the Torah was given on Sinai], how did Jacob erect a pillar and marry two sisters in their lifetime, and, in the opinion of our Rabbis, four sisters. Also, Amram [Moses' father] married his aunt, and Moses our teacher erected twelve pillars. How then was it possible that they should be permissive in matters of Torah which Abraham their ancestor had prohibited on himself, and for which G-d appointed him reward, when he [Abraham] was wont to command his children and his household after him to walk in His ways?

In the case of Jacob the Sages taught that he observed the Sabbath and established borders for Sabbath distances. In this matter of the Sabbath it is possible though that Jacob observed it because it is equal in importance to the entire Torah since it testifies to the act of Creation.

Perhaps then we should say that My charge refers to the Second Degree of marriages which were forbidden to the Sons of Noah; My commandments

applies to robbery and murder; My statutes refers to the laws against eating a limb torn off from a live animal, as well as breeding mixed kinds of cattle or grafting together different species of trees; and My laws refer to civil statutes and the prohibitions against idol worship. The Sons of Noah were commanded concerning all of these matters, and Abraham observed and fulfilled the Will of his Creator, observing even the details and the strictures of their commandments, even as the Sages mentioned: "The tractate of idolatry of our father Abraham contained four hundred chapters."

They further expounded [on the verse referring to Isaac, which says], And he found in that year a hundredfold, that he measured the produce for the purpose of tithing, since the patriarchs were the generous ones of the peoples, giving tithes to the poor or the priests of G-d, such as Shem and Eber and their disciples, just as it is said, And he was a priest of the most high G-d.

Now it appears to me from a study of the opinions of our Rabbis that Abraham our father learned the entire Torah by Ruach Hakodesh and occupied himself with its study and the reason for its commandments and its secrets, and he observed it in its entirety as "one who is not commanded but nevertheless observes it."

Furthermore, his observance of the Torah applied only in the Land of Israel, whereas Jacob married two sisters only when outside the Land, and similarly with Amram who married his aunt. For the Commandments are the ordinance of the G-d of the land, even though we have been charged with personal duties in all places. Our Rabbis have already alluded to this secret, and I will yet call your attention to it with the help of G-d.

And the matter of the erection of the pillar [by Jacob and Moses referred to above] was a commandment that was innovated at a certain time, as the Sages expounded from the verse, "Neither shalt thou set up a pillar which the Eternal thy G-d hateth, He hated it although it was pleasing to Him in the days of the ancestors."

And with respect to Joseph concerning whom the Sages expounded that he observed the Sabbath even in Egypt, it was because it is equal in importance to all the commandments, constituting, as it does, a testimony to Creatio ex nihilo. Therefore Joseph would do so in order to teach his children faith in the Creation of the world, to remove from their hearts the false doctrine of idolatry and the opinion of the Egyptians. This then is the intent [of the Sages when speaking of the patriarchs and their children observing the Torah].

In accordance with the literal meaning of Scripture, you may say that My charge means faith in the Deity, implying that Abraham believed in the unique Divine Name and kept vigilant guard over it in his heart, differing thereby with the worshippers of idols, and calling by the name of the Eternal to bring many to His worship. My commandments refers to all that G-d commanded Abraham: Go out of thy land, the bringing of his son as a burnt-offering, and the expulsion of the maid-servant and her son. My statutes refers to walking in the paths of G-d by being gracious and merciful, doing righteousness and judgment, and commanding his children and his household concerning them. And My Laws refers to the circumcision of Abraham himself and his sons and his servants, as well as all Commandments of the Sons of Noah which constitute their Law.

RASHBAM, WHO READS IT DIFFERENTLY

בקולי — a reference to the binding of Yitzchok where the Torah had used the expression עקב אשר (22,18) שמעת בקולי, "as a consequence of your heeding My instructions.

וישמור משמרתי — a reference to the circumcision, where G'd had used this expression (את בריתי תשמור) describing the command in 17,9 to circumcise himself.

מצותי — the command to perform circumcision when the baby is eight days old; as in 21,4.

חוקותי ותורותי — basically these include all the laws known to mankind prior to the giving of the Torah, such as not murdering, not stealing, etc. They include virtues such as extending hospitality. At the time the Torah was revealed, these were renewed

and elaborated on. At that time the covenant to keep these laws forever was concluded with the Jewish people.





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APTA · OHEV YISRAEL
Mend the Divine Presence's lack first, and your own need follows 47

LIZHENSK · NOAM ELIMELEKH
Why did Rivkah send Yaakov after material blessings? 48

BERDITCHEV · KEDUSHAT LEVI
Why did Rivkah's painful pregnancy make her feel unworthy? 49

AVRITCH · BAT AYIN
Why did G-d answer Yitzchak's prayer for a child rather than Rivkah's? 50

GER · SEFAT EMET
Why did Yitzchak have to dig his own wells? 51

APTA · OHEV YISRAEL, TOLDOT

Mend the Divine Presence's lack first, and your own need follows

Ohev Yisrael

Drawing on the verse "in all their affliction He is afflicted" (Yeshayahu 63:9) and the image of "I am lighter than My head" (Zohar), the Ohev Yisrael teaches that when a person prays for relief from trouble, the main intention should be to mend the lack felt by the Shechinah (the Divine Presence), so that his own need is repaired along with it. Yitzchak's prayer for Rivkah, who was barren, is presented as the model: he prayed for the Shechinah's lack, and Rivkah's own barrenness was then remedied. AI SUMMARY

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, etc." It is known that when some trouble or suffering comes upon a person, may it not happen, he should reflect and understand in his mind that there is surely great anguish for the holy Shechinah, so to speak, for "in all their affliction He is afflicted," so to speak. Therefore, when an upright person sets his heart to pray to G-d, may He be blessed, about some matter, the main kavanah (intention) and desire of his prayer must be that the lack that this causes in the Shechinah be filled, so to speak. This is in the manner of "I am lighter than My head," etc. When the flaw and lack there are repaired, his own lack is then repaired as well, automatically, and he is redeemed from his trouble.

Yitzchak, peace be upon him, did just this, for his entire aim, desire and kavanah were only to fill the lack in the holy Shechinah, so to speak. This is the meaning of "Yitzchak entreated Hashem, opposite his wife": that is, for the sake of the Shechinah, who is opposite his wife, for it is precisely she who is barren. And then Rivkah his wife was also automatically remembered. Understand this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

Why did Rivkah send Yaakov after material blessings?

Noam Elimelekh

Drawing on the Talmudic and Zoharic idea that Yitzchak intended the material blessings for Esav and the spiritual reward for Yaakov, the Noam Elimelekh reads Rivkah's doubled "lemor" as her intention to speak on a different level: she sent Yaakov after material blessings so that the spiritual sparks hidden within the material would be sustained, since nothing physical can have life without holy sparks from the upper worlds. AI SUMMARY

"And Rivkah spoke to Yaakov her son, saying: Behold, I heard your father speak to Esav your brother, saying." The early sages already raised a difficulty about the word "lemor" (saying). It has no basis here, as it does elsewhere, where it is explained as "saying to another." Moreover, "lemor" appears twice.

It seems to me that I should explain the first "lemor," and the other will then be resolved on its own. This rests on what is found in the books: How could it enter our minds that Yitzchak our father, peace be upon him, wanted to bless Esav and not Yaakov? They explained that in truth he wanted to bless Esav in this world, with material things, and to bless Yaakov in the World to Come. Yitzchak wanted all four exiles to be under the hand of Esav; see there. Now Rivkah our mother wanted to sustain the children of Israel in exile, so that they too would have a little in this world.

And it is the way of the tzaddik (righteous one) that even when he speaks of material things, his kavanah (intention) is in the upper worlds, in spiritual matters. This is the meaning of "And Rivkah spoke to Yaakov her son, saying." That is to say, when she told Yaakov to receive material blessings from his father, her kavanah was in the upper worlds, for the sake of the spiritual within the material. For there is no material thing that does not contain spiritual nitzotzot (holy sparks). This is "lemor": her kavanah was for a different saying, for the sake of the spiritual, as above.

"Speak to Esav your brother, saying." Rivkah feared that Yaakov would not want to receive the material blessings, since the tzaddik has no desire for material things. Therefore Rivkah said, "I heard your father, etc.," also "saying." That is, when your father speaks of wanting to bless him materially, his kavanah is also to say a different saying, for the sake of the spiritual, as above: that in the material too there be spiritual nitzotzot. For there is nothing material in the world that can have vitality without the nitzotzot kedoshim from the upper worlds.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

Why did Rivkah's painful pregnancy make her feel unworthy?

Kedushat Levi

Drawing on the Ari's teaching that righteous women are spared the pains of pregnancy and birth, the Kedushat Levi explains that Rivkah's distress led her to fear she was not worthy, since a person who is not good cannot host holiness. G-d reassured her that she was righteous and that her suffering came from the two nations in her womb, who were in opposition to one another. AI SUMMARY

Genesis 25,22. she said: “if so (that the children already quarrel within my womb) ,what is the purpose of my existence?” We can understand this complaint of Rivkah on the basis of a comment by the Ari’zal that righteous women are spared the pain and discomfort of pregnancy. Rivkah, while experiencing even more than the normal amount of pain and discomfort during her pregnancy, had concluded that this was proof that G’d had not considered her righteous.

Moreover, it is a tenet of our faith that if someone is not a “good” person, such a person will not serve as a receptacle for anything holy or potentially holy. Our sages have based this insight on Leviticus 11,15 את כל עורב למינו, “and every subspecies of raven each according to its species” (is forbidden to eat). [The word כל in that verse means that even close association with something ritually unclean, i.e. a raven, is an obstacle to such a person hosting holy spirit, etc. Ed.

] According to Bereshit Rabbah 63,6 whenever Rivkah passed a Torah academy Yaakov would make an effort to leave her womb, whereas when she passed a pagan temple Esau would try to leave her womb. Thereupon she went to ask G’d about this strange phenomenon. The Midrash states further that the word זה in our verse refers to the fact that originally, -if not for her complaint- Rivkah was slated to become the mother of all the twelve tribes; seeing that she appeared to find fault with G’d’s arrangement, she was told that she would become the mother of only two sons, one of whom would be Esau.

One of the sages in the Midrash takes issue with the literal meaning of Yaakov and Esau respectively having shown awareness of when their mother passed a Torah academy or a pagan temple, and states that, of course, this is merely a simile, and that Rivkah consulted with the heads of the academy founded by Shem and subsequently headed by his great grandson Ever.

According to another opinion offered, Rivkah knew that the source of holiness is the One known as אנכי, and when she exclaimed למה זה אנכי, she expressed her confusion how she could be the receptacle of a son who clearly strived for holiness if she was not worthy. On the other hand, if she were worthy, why did she experience such a difficult pregnancy? G’d put her mind at rest, telling her that her difficulties did not mean that she was not worthy, but that the other son who would be unworthy was the one that caused her present problems.

Translation: Kedushat Levi translated by Rb. Eliyahu Munk

AVRITCH · BAT AYIN, TOLDOT

Why did G-d answer Yitzchak's prayer for a child rather than Rivkah's?

Bat Ayin

Drawing on Rashi's comment that "by him" means the prayer of a tzaddik who is the son of a tzaddik is not like that of a tzaddik who is the son of a wicked man, Bat Ayin, citing a teaching of Rabbi Zev of Zhitomir, explains that G-d accepts prayer offered in humility, with a person making himself like the remnants of a song and relying on the merit of the forefathers. Yitzchak could pray on that merit, while Rivkah, the daughter of a wicked man, had to rely mainly on her own deeds, so G-d turned to Yitzchak's prayer. AI SUMMARY

"Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren; and Hashem let Himself be entreated by him" (Bereshit 25:21). Rashi explains: "by him," and not by her, because the prayer of a tzaddik (righteous one) who is the son of a tzaddik is not like the prayer of a tzaddik who is the son of a wicked man.

We can say about this as follows. I heard from the holy tzaddik, Rabbi Zev of Zhitomir, an explanation of the phrase "Who chooses songs of praise" (in the Yishtabach prayer). It means that the Creator of all worlds, blessed be He, chooses the remnants (shirayim) of song, that is, the one who makes himself like remnants at the time of song and prayer, and so forth. To understand this: the essence of divine service is humility and true lowliness. When a person stands to pray before the Creator of all worlds, blessed be He, he should reflect in his mind: "On account of my deeds I am not fit to speak a single word before Him, may He be blessed, or to ask anything of Him, great or small. On account of my deeds I do not even deserve an opening of the mouth to stand and ask before Him. I only ask the Blessed Creator to help me in the merit of my forefathers."

This kind of prayer is accepted before Him, may He be blessed, as the verse says (Tehillim 145:18): "Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." That is, Hashem is close to those who call upon Him, to accept their prayer, when they call upon Him in truth, meaning by the merit of the forefathers. Truth is the aspect of the forefathers: head, middle, end.

But this applies when he is a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik. Then he can ask Hashem by the merit of his forefathers. When he is a tzaddik the son of a wicked man, however, he cannot ask by the merit of his forefathers. His request must rest mainly on his own deeds. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not turn so readily to accept such a prayer, for He chooses only "songs of praise," that is, the one who makes himself like remnants.

Now Yitzchak was a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik, so his prayer rested only on the merit of his forefathers. Rivkah was a righteous woman, the daughter of a wicked man, and her prayer rested on her own merit. This is the meaning of "Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife": Yitzchak's entreaty and prayer stood "opposite" his wife, that is, in opposition to her prayer. Why was his prayer in opposition? The verse gives the reason: "because she was barren." That is, in her prayer she herself was the main element (ikar), because she could not ask by the merit of the forefathers, as explained above. Therefore "Hashem let Himself be entreated by him." The Creator of the worlds, blessed be He, turned only to his prayer, because his prayer was only in the aspect of remnants, and the Holy One, blessed be He, chooses only the one who makes himself like remnants at the time of song and prayer.

This is what Rashi explained: the prayer of a tzaddik the son of a tzaddik is not like the prayer of a tzaddik the son of a wicked man. The former can ask by the merit of the forefathers and makes himself like remnants, so the Creator, blessed be He, turns to his prayer. The latter cannot ask by the merit of the

forefathers, and he is the main basis of his own prayer. The Creator, blessed be He, chooses only "songs of praise," as explained above, in the aspect of humility. May it be His will that we merit this.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

GER · TOLDOT, SEFAT EMET

Why did Yitzchak have to dig his own wells?

Sefat Emet

The main teaching is that each of the Patriarchs was worthy in his own right, so Yitzchak could not simply inherit Avraham's spiritual attainments but had to dig out the straight path himself. Drawing on the Midrash, the Sefat Emet adds that every tikkun (repair) brings a new concealment and a stronger yetzer (inclination), so each generation must rise level by level, with Yitzchak's path rooted in yirah (awe) and gevurah (strength, severity) and Avraham's in chesed (lovingkindness) and love. AI SUMMARY

"And all the wells that his father's servants had dug... the Philistines stopped up... And Yitzchak dug again..." It is taught that only three are called "fathers," meaning Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. But this is difficult either way. If so, let us follow the first and call only Avraham a father. The reason, however, is that every tzaddik (righteous one) has merit through his forefathers, whereas each of the three Patriarchs was worthy on his own. So it is taught in the midrash (rabbinic homiletic teaching) on the verse "And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov...": each one was worthy on his own. Corresponding to this, the verse tells us here that all the illuminations that his father had attained were afterward stopped up, and Yitzchak was compelled to dig and clarify the straight path by himself.

This is also the meaning of "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine." As the midrash teaches, there are ten famines in the world. That is, there are ten traits, corresponding to the ten utterances, which the tzaddikim must fulfill. As it is taught in Avot, "in order to give good reward to the righteous..." Avraham our father, peace be upon him, repaired the aspect of chesed and love, and he repaired the famine of his days. Afterward, "there was another famine." So too with Yaakov.

The truth is that after every tikkun a new concealment arises. This is also the meaning of "one people shall be stronger than the other." As our Sages (Chazal) said, whoever is greater than his fellow, his yetzer (inclination) is greater than his. So it is that the more a person repairs himself, the more the power of the yetzer and of the sitra achra (the "other side") against him increases. Through this he adds strength to overcome it, and he rises higher. This proceeds level after level; understand this. Likewise, had Avraham's way not become concealed, no one would afterward have sought a new way. Therefore "there was a famine," and Yitzchak needed to seek out for himself the way of yirah and gevurah.

[And it is written, "Do not go down to Egypt." For the deeds of the fathers ascend to benefit the children, so that they need not do everything in actuality. That is, Avraham went down to Egypt, and the Zohar explains that he needed to put himself into it in order to repair all the dangerous places, so as to nullify the famine that came from the sitra achra; see there. Yitzchak was prepared for this, and so he was told, "Do not go down..." For the preparation for it was sufficient.

This is the meaning of "He chooses their ways...": since he is prepared for the deeds of his fathers, he need not demonstrate it in actual deed. Only

Avraham our father, peace be upon him, who was the first to repair, needed to be tried with ten trials in actuality. This is the meaning of "because Avraham listened to My voice..." Therefore Yitzchak no longer needed to go down to Egypt in actuality, as above.] So too, in particular, with each and every person, who must repair all ten of the above levels.

And certainly Avraham our father, peace be upon him, had a true fear of Heaven, as it is written, "Now I know that you are a G-d-fearing man." As for his trait being chesed and love, it was through love that he came to awe, while Yitzchak came to love through awe. But all the traits are included in one another. This is the meaning of "Yitzchak, son of Avraham..." And so wrote the Ramban, of blessed memory: in the matters of this world (olam hazeh), love and awe contradict each other, since toward one whom a person loves, awe does not apply. But in the avodah (divine service) of G-d, love and awe are united. For true love is what brings one to awe, and likewise true awe is what brings one to love, as above.

Translation: translated by AI (anthropic/claude-sonnet-5.5)

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Should children be exact copies of their parents?

THE NETZIV · HA'AMEK DAVAR ON GENESIS 25:28 56

Why Yitzchak and Rivkah loved their sons differently

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Should children be exact copies of their parents?

Rabbi Sacks: On Clones and Identity

Drawing on the midrash in Sanhedrin 107b, the essay explains that Yitzchak's physical resemblance to Avraham was a sign that Avraham was truly his father, but that it also led to a loss of individuality, since people could no longer tell the two apart and Avraham therefore prayed to grow old. The author draws from this that every person is unique and non-substitutable, and uses it to argue against eugenic cloning, which threatens to make children replicas of their parents and to treat human life as a commodity. AI SUMMARY

Toledot תולדות

Toledot tells the story of Isaac and Rebecca's twin sons, Jacob and Esau, who struggle in the womb and seem destined to clash throughout their lives and those of their descendants. It contains two great passages: the birth and childhood of the boys, and the scene in which Jacob, at Rebecca's behest, dresses in Esau's clothes and takes his blessing from their father Isaac, now blind. Between them is a narrative about Isaac and Rebecca going to Gerar because of famine, very similar to that told about Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 20.

The first of the following essays is about the close similarity between Isaac and Abraham in appearance and in other ways, which has a message about a contemporary question in medical ethics: the desirability or otherwise of eugenic cloning. The second is about the precise meaning of the revelation given to Rebecca about the twins and their destiny, before they are born. The third is about Isaac in the land of the Philistines, one of the first intimations of what would later be called anti-Semitism. The fourth is about the surprisingly sympathetic portrayal of Esau in the scene in which Jacob takes his blessing.

On Clones and Identity

Around the gaps, silences and seeming repetitions of the biblical text, midrash weaves its interpretations, enriching the written word with oral elaboration, giving the text new resonances of meaning. Often, to the untutored ear, midrash sounds fanciful, far removed from the plain sense of the verse. But once we have learned the language and sensibility of midrash, we begin to realise how deep are its spiritual and moral insights.

One example was prompted by the opening verse of Parashat Toledot:

And these are the generations of Isaac, son of Abraham: Abraham begat Isaac. (25:19)

The problem is obvious. The first half of the sentence tells us that Isaac was the son of Abraham. Why then does the text repeat, "Abraham begat Isaac"? Looking at the apparent redundancy of the text in the context of the Abraham-Isaac narrative as a whole, the sages offered the following interpretation:

The cynics of the time were saying, "Sarah became pregnant through Avimelekh. See how many years she lived with Abraham without being able to have a child by him." What did the Holy One blessed be He do? He made Isaac's facial features exactly resemble those of Abraham, so that everyone had to admit that Abraham begat Isaac. This is what is meant by the words "Abraham begat Isaac" – there was clear evidence that Abraham was Isaac's father.

This is an ingenious reading, taken in the context of the narrative as a whole. The opening of Genesis 21 speaks of the birth of Isaac to Sarah. Immediately prior to this, in Genesis 20, we are told that Sarah was taken into the harem of Avimelekh, king of Gerar. Hence the speculation of the sages that gossips were suggesting that Abraham was infertile; that Avimelekh was Isaac's father and that the conception took place during the time Sarah was in

Avimelekh's harem. Hence the double emphasis of the verse: not only was Abraham Isaac's father in fact, but also everyone could see this because father and son looked exactly alike.

But there is a deeper point at stake. To understand it we need to turn to another midrash, this time on the opening verse of Genesis 24:

And Abraham was old, well advanced in years: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. (24:1)

Again there is a problem of an apparently superfluous phrase. If Abraham was old, why does the verse need to add that he was "well advanced in years"? The rabbis noticed something else as well: Abraham and Sarah are the first people in the Torah described as being old, despite the fact that many previously mentioned biblical characters lived to a much greater age. Putting these two facts together with the tradition that Abraham and Isaac looked identical, they arrived at the following interpretation:

Until Abraham, people did not grow old. However [because Abraham and Isaac looked alike] people who saw Abraham said, "That is Isaac," and people who saw Isaac said, "That is Abraham." Abraham then prayed to grow old, and this is the meaning [of the phrase] "And Abraham was old." (Sanhedrin 107b)

The close physical resemblance between Abraham and Isaac refuted the charge of those who said that Abraham was not the real father, but it gave rise to an unexpected difficulty. Both father and son, identical in appearance, suffered a loss of individuality. Nor is this pure speculation – it is pointing to a subtle but important aspect of the story. Examine Genesis carefully, and we see that Isaac is the least individuated of the patriarchs. His life reads like a replay of his father's. Like Abraham, he is forced by famine to go to the land of the Philistines.

He too encounters Avimelekh. He too feels impelled to say that his wife is his sister. He re-digs the wells his father dug. Isaac seems to do little that is distinctively his own.

Sensitive to this, the rabbis told a profound psychological story. Parents are not their children. Children are not replicas of their parents. We are each unique and have a unique purpose. That is why Abraham prayed to God that there be some clear and recognizable difference between father and son.

There is, I believe, contemporary relevance to this midrash, especially in relation to a new medical technology: eugenic or reproductive cloning. Cloning – the method of nuclear cell transfer pioneered by Dr Ian Wilmut in the experiment that created Dolly the sheep in 1997 – raises profound issues of medical ethics, especially in relation to humans.

Cloning is not just another technology. It raises issues not posed by other forms of assisted reproduction such as artificial insemination or in vitro fertilisation. Nuclear cell transfer is a form of asexual reproduction. We do not know why it is that large, long-living creatures reproduce sexually. From an evolutionary point of view, asexual reproduction would have been much simpler. Yet none of the higher mammals reproduce asexually.

Some biologists argue that this is because only by the unpredictable combination of genetic endowments of parents and grandparents, can a species generate the variety it needs to survive. The history of the human presence on earth is marked by a destruction of biodiversity on a massive scale. To take risks with our own genetic future would be irresponsible in the extreme.

There is another objection to cloning, namely the threat to the integrity of children so conceived. To be sure, genetically identical persons already exist in the case of identical twins. It is one thing, though, for this to happen, quite another to bring it about deliberately. Cloning represents an ethical danger in a way that naturally occurring phenomena do not. Identical twins cannot be brought into being so that one may serve as a substitute or replacement for the other. Cloning, however, can bring us to treat persons as means rather than as ends in themselves. It risks the commoditisation of human life.

It cannot but transform some of the most basic features of our humanity.

Every child born of the genetic mix between two parents is unpredictable, like yet unlike those who have brought it into the world. That mix of kinship and difference is an essential feature of human relationships. It is the basis of a key belief of Judaism, that each individual is unique, non-substitutable, and irreplaceable. In a famous mishna, the sages taught: "When a human being makes many coins in a single mint, they all come out the same. God makes every human being in the same image, His image, yet they all emerge different."

The glory of creation is that unity in heaven creates diversity on earth. God wants every human life to be unique. As Harvard philosopher Hilary Putnam put it: "Every child has the right to be a complete surprise to its parents" – which means the right to be no-one else's clone.

What would become of love if we knew that if we lost our beloved we could create a replica? What would happen to our sense of self if we discovered that we were manufactured to order?

The midrash about Abraham and Isaac does not bear directly on cloning. Even if it did, it would be problematic to infer halakha from aggada, that is, to derive a legal conclusion from a non-legal source (aggada is the general rabbinic term for anything that does not involve law). Yet the story is not without its ethical undertones. At first Isaac looked like a clone of his father. Eventually Abraham had to pray for the deed to be undone.

If there is a mystery at the heart of the human condition it is otherness: the otherness of man and woman, parent and child. It is the space we make for otherness that makes love something other than narcissism, and parenthood something greater than self-replication. It is this that gives every human child the right to be themselves, to know they are not reproductions of someone else, constructed according to a pre-planned genetic template. Without this, would childhood be bearable? Would love survive? Would a world of clones still be a human world? We are each in God's image but no one else's.

THE NETZIV

Why Yitzchak and Rivkah loved their sons differently

Ha'amek Davar on Genesis 25:28

Yitzchak's love for Esav was reciprocal and tied to the moment: Esav served his father, and Yitzchak enjoyed that service, while Yaakov sat in the tent and did little serving. Rivkah's love for Yaakov, by contrast, rested on his merit and his ultimate purpose, which is why the verse uses the present tense, and it deepened over time. The Netziv's reading of the love's grammar ("et" for love rooted in heart and thought, "le" for love expressed in fulfilling the beloved's wishes) draws on the Torah's own usage in Devarim 6:5, and the claim that Yaakov's love grew day by day draws on the Talmud's statement in Avodah Zarah 3b about Torah study bringing a thread of kindness by day. AI SUMMARY

"Isaac favored Esau because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah favored Jacob."

AND YITZCHAK LOVED ESAV. — It does not say "le-Esav" ("to Esav"), as in "ve'ahavta le-re'acha" ("you shall love your neighbor as yourself"). As will be explained in Devarim 6:5, love whose essence lies in thought and in the heart is written with the word "et." Love whose essence is the fulfillment of the beloved's wishes, by contrast, is written with the prefix "le."

BECAUSE GAME WAS IN HIS MOUTH. — The verse makes clear that Yitzchak and Rivkah were not divided in their opinions. Both of them knew who the essential seed was, of whom it is said, "For

through Yitzchak shall your seed be called" (Genesis 21:12): "through Yitzchak," but not all of Yitzchak. That one is Yaakov, who dwells in the tent of Avraham, in Torah. Yitzchak's love for Esav was only a reciprocal love, for Esav served him like a servant, and Yitzchak greatly enjoyed his service. Yaakov, by contrast, sat in the tent and did not serve much. See further below, 26:34.

AND RIVKAH. — For she did not need to make use of her sons' service.

LOVED YAAKOV. — She looked only at his merit and his ultimate purpose. Therefore the verse uses the present tense. With Yitzchak it is not written that "Yitzchak was loving," because Yitzchak's love was only incidental, dependent on the circumstances of the moment. Indeed, at the end of his days the love was reversed. See what I wrote at the end of this parashah. Rivkah's love, by contrast, stemmed from the very nature of the matter. It also grew day by day, as they said in Avodah Zarah 3b: "Whoever studies Torah at night, a thread of kindness is drawn over him by day."



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