

ברוך אתה יהוה
אלהינו מלך העולם
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו
וצונו לעסוק
בדברי תורה.

Barukh Atah Adonai
Eloheinu melekh ha-olam
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu la'asok
b'divrei Torah.

Blessed are You, YHVH,
our God, eternal sovereign, who
sanctifies us in God's connecting
command to busy ourselves
in words of Torah.

WHO REALLY SAID HINEINI?
Genesis 27:1-23

MORAL TEST? DOES ANYONE "PASS"??

Do the ends justify the means?!!

ויהי כִּי-זָקַן יִצְחָק וַתְּחַהֵּן עֵינָיו מֵרְאוֹת
וַיִּקְרָא אֶת-עֵשָׂו בְּנוֹ הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו
בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הֲנִנִּי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-נָא
זָקַנְתִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי וְעַתָּה שָׂא-
נָא כְלִיד תְּלִיד וְקִשְׁתְּךָ וְצַד הַשֶּׁדֶה
וְצוּדָה לִי צִידָה וְעֵשָׂה-לִּי מִטְעָמִים
כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲהַבְתִּי וְהַבִּיָּאָה לִּי וְאֹכְלָה
בְּעֶבֶר תִּבְרַכְךָ נַפְשִׁי בְּטָרִם אָמוֹת:

1-4. When Yitzhak was old, his eyes dimmed from seeing, he called Esav his eldest son and said to him, "My son!" He said to him, **Hineini**. He said, "Here I became old, and I don't know the day of my death. Now please take your implements, quiver and bow: go out to the field, and hunt me some game. Make me tasty food that I love and bring it to me, so I can eat and my soul can bless you before I die."

Avraham
Esav - "out?"
Yaakov
Moshe –
big moment

REDEEM WHAT IS IMMORAL?
• after Esav-Yaakov
• Rivkah prophesy?

וְרִבְקָה שָׁמְעַת בְּדַבַּר יִצְחָק אֶל-עֵשָׂו בְּנוֹ
וַיִּלְךְ עֵשָׂו הַשֶּׁדֶה לְצוּד צִיד הַבְּיָאָה:
וְרִבְקָה אָמְרָה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּנָה לְאִמֹּר הִנֵּה
שָׁמְעֵתִי אֶת-אָבִיד מִדְּבַר אֶל-עֵשָׂו אַחִיד
לְאִמֹּר הַבִּיָּאָה לִּי צִיד וְעֵשָׂה-לִּי מִטְעָמִים
וְאֹכְלָה וְאִבְרַכְכָּה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִפְנֵי
מוֹתִי וְעַתָּה בְּנִי שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי לְאֲשֶׁר אָנִי
מְצַוָּה אֲתָךְ: לֵךְ-נָא אֶל-הַצֹּאן וְקַח-לִּי
מִשָּׁם שְׁנֵי גְדֵי עֵאִים טֹבִים וְאֲעִשֶׂה
אֲתָם מִטְעָמִים לְאָבִיד כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲהַב:

5-9. **Rivkah** heard Yitzhak's words to his son Esav. Esav went to the field to hunt for game and bring it. Rivkah spoke to Yaakov her son saying, "I heard your father speak to Esav your brother, saying: 'Bring me game, and make me tasty food, so I can eat and bless you before YHVH before my death.' Now, my son, hear my voice by which I command you. Go to the flock, and fetch me two good kids of the goats. I will make of them tasty food for your father as he loves."

primogeniture reversed

female hutzpah
female deceit
Yaakov deceit

Repetition means something more - physical versus spiritual?

וְהַבִּאתָ לְאָבִיד וְאָכַל בְּעֶבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ
לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-רִבְקָה אִמּוֹ
הֵן עֲשׂו אַחִי אִישׁ שָׁעַר וְאֹנְכִי אִישׁ חֶלֶק:
אוּלִי יִמְשֹׁנִי אָבִי וְהִיִּיתִי בְּעֵינָיו כְּמִתְעַתֵּעַ
וְהַבִּאתִי עָלַי קִלְלָה וְלֹא בְרָכָה: וְהִיאָמְרָה
לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קִלְלָתְךָ בְּנִי אֵךְ שְׁמַע בְּקוֹלִי
וְלֵךְ קַח-לִּי וַיִּלְךְ וַיִּקַּח וַיָּבֵא לְאִמּוֹ וַתַּעַשׂ
אִמּוֹ מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲהַב אָבִיו:

10-14. "Bring it to your father, so he eats and blesses you before he dies." Yaakov said to Rivkah his mother, "Esav my brother is a hairy man but I am a smooth man. If my father feels me and I seem to him a deceiver, I bring on myself curse and not blessing." His mother said to him: "On me would be your curse, my son. Just hear my voice, and go get for me." He went, took and brought to his mother. His mother made tasty food as his father loved."

emphasizes Rivkah?

ROLE OF FEMININE?

וַתִּקַּח רִבְקָה אֶת-בְּגָדֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנָה הַגָּדֹל
הַחֲמֹדֹת אֲשֶׁר אֲתָהּ בִּבְיָתָהּ וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶת-
יַעֲקֹב בְּנָה הַקָּטָן: וְאֵת עֹרֹת גְּדֵי הָעֵאִים
הַלְּבִיּוֹשָׁה עַל-גְּדֵיו וְעַל חֶלְקֵת צוּאָרָיו:
וַתִּתֵּן אֶת-הַמִּטְעָמִים וְאֶת-הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר
עָשְׂתָה בְּיַד יַעֲקֹב בְּנָה: וַיָּבֵא אֶל-אָבִיו
וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי מִי אַתָּה בְּנִי:

15-18. Rivkah took her elder son Esav's clothes [from] the house and put them on Yaakov her younger son. She put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth of his neck. She put in the hands of her son Yaakov the dish and bread that she prepared. He went to his father and said, "Father?" He said, "Yes, **who are you, my son?**" Did Yitzhak anticipate this?

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-אָבִיו אֲנֹכִי עֵשָׂו בְּכֶרְךָ
עָשִׂיתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֵלַי קוּם-נָא שִׁבָּה
וְאֹכְלָה מִצִּידִי בְּעֶבֶר תִּבְרַכְכִּי נַפְשְׁךָ:
וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-בְּנוֹ מִה-זֶה מַהֲרַתָּ
לָקֵמָצָא בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי הִקְרַח יְהוָה
אֶל-הֵידָד לִפְנֵי: וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל-יַעֲקֹב
גֵּשָׁה-נָא וְאִמְשָׁךְ בְּנִי הֲאֵתָה זֶה בְּנִי עֵשָׂו
אִם-לֹא: וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב אֶל-יִצְחָק אָבִיו
וַיִּמְשָׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַקֹּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהַיָּדַים
זֵדִי עֲשׂו: וְלֹא הִפִּירוֹ כִּי-הָיוּ זֵדִי כַּיָּדִי
עֲשׂו אַחִיו שְׁעָרָתָה וַיִּבְרַכְהָ:

19-23. Yaakov told his father, "I am Esav your first. I did as you told me. Please sit up and eat my catch, so your soul will bless me." Yitzhak asked his son, "How did you act so fast, my son?" He said, "YHVH your God prepared my way." Yitzhak told him: "Approach so I may feel [if] you are my son Esav or not." Yaakov approached his father Yitzhak, who felt him saying, "The voice is Yaakov's, but the hands are Esav's." He did not recognize him: his hands were hairy as his brother Esav. **He blessed him.**

validity if induced by fraud?

Is Yaakov complicit / knowing?

hedging bets?

Genesis 25:23-34

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לָהּ שְׁנֵי גוֹיִם בְּבֶטְנְךָ וְשְׁנֵי
לְאָמִים מִמֶּנּוּ יִפְרְדּוּ וְלֵאמֹם מְלֶאֶם
אֶמְצוֹ וְרֵב יַעֲבֹד צְעִיר: וַיִּמְלְאוּ זְמִינָהּ
לִלְדוֹת וְהָיָה תוֹמֵם בְּבֶטְנָהּ:

23-24. YHVH said to [Rivkah], "Two peoples are in your innards, two nations will issue from you and separate nation from nation. One will be stronger and the older will serve the younger." When her birth time came, there were twins in her womb.

וַיֵּצֵא הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוּלִי כֹלֹ כְּאֲדָרְתַּת שֶׁעַר
וַיִּקְרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו: וְאַחֲרָיו כָּלֹ יָצָא אַחִיו
וַיִּדּוּ אֶחְזוֹת בְּעַקֵּב עֵשָׂו וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב
וַיִּצְחַק בְּרֹ-שָׁשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּלִדְתָּ אֹתָם:

25-26. The first came out red completely covered in hair: they named him Esav. Then his brother came out grasping Esav's heel: they named him Yaakov [=heeled]. Yitzhak was 60 years old at their birth.

וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ יָדָע צֹד
אִישׁ שָׂדֵה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם לֵשֶׁב אֲהֲלִים:
וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת-עֵשָׂו כִּי-צִיד בְּפִיו
וְרִבְקָה אֲהֵבַת אֶת-יַעֲקֹב:

27-28. The boys grew up: Esav was a skillful trapper, a man of the field; Yaakov was a simple man, sitting at the tents [raising livestock]. Yitzhak loved Esav for the hunt in his mouth. Rivkah loves Yaakov.

וַיֵּד יַעֲקֹב נֹזֵד וַיָּבֵא עֵשָׂו מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה
וַהֲוֵא עָרִי: וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל-יַעֲקֹב
הֲלֵעִיטְנִי נָא מִן-הָאֲדָם הָאֲדָם הַזֶּה כִּי
עָרִי אֲכַכִּי...:

29-30. Once when Yaakov was cooking a stew, Esav came in famished from the field. Esav said to Yaakov, "Please give me some of that red stuff, for I am famished...."

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב מִכֶּרֶה כִּיִּם אֶת-בְּכֹרְתְךָ
לִי: וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוֹת
וְלָמָּה-זֶּה לִי בְּכֹרְתִי:

31-32. Yaakov said, "First sell me today your birthright." Esav said, "Here I am about to die, so what use to me is the birthright?"

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב הַשְּׂבֻעָה לִי כִּיִּם וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ
וַיִּמְכֹּר אֶת-בְּכֹרְתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב: וַיַּעֲקֹב נָתַן
לְעֵשָׂו לֶחֶם וַיִּנְזֵד עַד-שָׁשִׁים וַיֵּאָכֵל וַיִּשְׂתֵּה
וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבֵּי עֵשָׂו אֶת-הַבְּכֹרָה:

33-34. Yaakov said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Yaakov. Yaakov gave Esav bread and stew. He ate and drank, got up and left. So did Esav spurn the birthright.

Exodus Rabbah 1:1

חוֹשֵׁד שְׁבִטוֹ שׁוֹנֵא בְּנוֹ וְאֵהָבוּ שְׁחָרוּ
מוֹסָר... לְלַמֵּד שְׁכָל הַמוֹנֵעַ בְּנוֹ מִן
הַמְּרָדוֹת סוֹף בָּא לְתַרְבוֹת רָעָה
וְשׁוֹנֵאָהוּ, שְׁכֹן מְצִינוֹ בִּישְׁמַעֲאֵל שְׁהִיו
לוֹ גִּעְגּוּעִים עַל אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וְלֹא רָדָהוּ
וַיֵּצֵא לְתַרְבוֹת רָעָה וְשׁוֹנֵאָהוּ וְהוֹצִיאֵו
מִבֵּיתוֹ רִיקָם. מָה עָשָׂה יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל
כְּשֶׁהָיָה בֶן ט"ו שָׁנָה הִתְחִיל לְהִבְיָא צֻלָּם
מִן הַשּׁוּק וְהָיָה מְצַחֵק בּוֹ וְעוֹבְדוֹ, כְּמוֹ
שְׂרָאָה מֵאַחֲרִים. מִיָּד וַתֵּרָא שְׂרָה אֶת
בֶּן הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם
מְצַחֵק... כִּיֵּצֵא בּוֹ וַיֵּאָהֵב יִצְחָק אֶת עֵשָׂו
לְפִיכָּה יָצָא לְתַרְבוֹת רָעָה ע"א לֹא רָדָהוּ.

"One who spares the rod hates their son; one who loves will chasten" (Prov. 13:24)..., which teaches that in withholding rebuke from their son, in the end the son will become depraved and hate them. We find thus in Yishmael, beloved of Avraham who did not chasten him, so he became depraved.... What did Yishmael do? When he was 15 years old, he brought an idol from the market, played with it and prayed to it as he saw others do. Immediately "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she bore to Avraham, *playing*" (Gen. 21:9)... And we find thus in "Yitzhak loved Esav" (Gen. 25:28) and did not chasten him, which sent Esav on a path of depravity.

Rashi, Gen. 25:34

ויבז עשו. העיד הכתוב על רשעו
שבזה עבודתו של מקום:

So did Esav spurn – Torah testifies to his wickedness that he despised service of the Omnipresent.

Midrash Tanhuma Buber, Toledot 4:6

ויבז עשו. כסבור שהוא שוחק עם
יעקב, והקב"ה מסכים מלמעלה,
שנאמר כה אמר ה' בני בכורי ישראל.

So did Esav spurn – He thought he was joking with Yaakov, but God concurred from above, as in (Ex. 4:22), "Thus says YHVH: Israel is My first born son."

Ibn Ezra, Gen. 25:34

ויבו עשו. גם זאת הבכורה בעבור
שראה שאין לאביו עשר... ואילו היה
הלחם רב בבית אביו, והוא נכבד
בעיניו לא מכר בכורתו בעבור נזיד ...
ועורי לב יחשבו כי העושר מעלה
גדולה לצדיקים, והנה אליהו יוכיח,
ועוד ישאלו למה חסר השם ממון
ליצחק, אולי יודיעונו למה חסר מאור
עיניו, ואל ידחוונו בקנה של דרש כי יש
לו סוד, ואין לנו לחפש, כי עמקו
מחשבות השם, ואין כח בדעת האדם
להביןם.

So did Esav spurn – He saw no birthright, for he saw that his father had no wealth.... Were there ample food in his father's house, Esav – the honored one in his father's sight – would not have sold his birthright for stew.... The blind of mind might think that wealth is a great thing for the righteous, but the prophet Elijah shows the opposite. They further ask, why did God withhold wealth from Yitzhak? Let them say why God withheld sight from Yitzhak's eyes! ...[T]here is a secret meaning in the matter and we must not probe it, for God's thoughts are deep and beyond human understanding.

Barenblat, Dvar for P. Toldot 5782

I've thought about how Jacob, whose name means "heel" because he emerged from the womb clutching Esav's heel, is being a heel here. It feels like poetic justice when his uncle Lavan tricks him into marrying the wrong sister. Maybe Torah teaches us that the karma of our choices stays with us.

This year, all I can think is: Rivkah in this story is really not teaching the kind of moral lesson that I wish for. It looks like she wants to make sure her favorite kid gets the blessing, so she tells him to trick his father by pretending to be someone he's not? I don't feel good about that.

Earlier in the story, when pregnant, Rivkah asks God why it feels like there's warfare in her womb. God tells her that two nations struggle inside her, and that the older will serve the younger. Maybe that's why *midrash* teaches that she was a prophet: she knew that Yaakov had a special destiny.

Maybe she was practicing what would later be called consequentialism: as long as the outcome is good, then the act that produced that outcome must be moral, right? If it gets us to "Yaakov becomes the ancestor of the Jewish people," then whatever steps she took to get there must be okay?

I disagree. How we work toward our goals matters at least as much as whatever those goals are. Integrity matters. Truth matters. Facts matter. I would never instruct my child to pretend to be someone he's not, even if there were some kind of reward for that pretending.

And generally speaking, Jewish tradition takes integrity really seriously. Maimonides teaches that we should never "be one thing in mouth and another in heart," that our insides should match our outsides, that deceiving another human being is like stealing their mind and we should never do it.

So why are most of our sages okay with what Rivkah did here? Most of the sages of Jewish tradition argue that this wasn't *really* a deception, because our mystics teach that Yaakov's soul was formed first in the womb. His essence was special. They see Rivkah as helping Yaakov become who he truly is.

My friend R. Mike Moskowitz compares it to someone coming out and changing their clothing style. When Yaakov changes his outward appearance, with Esav's borrowed clothes and the goat skins on his arms, now his dad is finally able to experience him as he's always seen himself, as he truly is.

I like that interpretation. I agree that parents need to see our kids as they truly are! But for me, it's a stretch to read these verses that way. If we choose to do that, I think we need to be honest with ourselves that we're doing a lot of work to make Rivkah's actions okay when on the surface, they just aren't.

Even if you want to argue that only the outcomes matter, the choice that Rivkah makes harms Esav, at minimum. And I think we can make a case that this choice harms Yaakov and Yitzhak's relationship, too. Even if her intentions were good, Rivkah's choice has negative impacts on the entire family.... I wish that Rivkah had been able to say to Yaakov: don't worry about your brother, just go be real with your dad. Tell him you love him, and ask him for the blessing you most need. Ask him for the blessing you're going to need after he dies. Ask him for the blessing that will help you set off on life's journey.

Midrash Shir Ami, Toledot 5785:1

Rivkah knew that it would be unsafe for Yaakov to walk in the world smooth, unskilled, more cerebral than physical, nerdy. And Rivkah knew that this unsafety would keep Yaakov from becoming his truest self. So she clothed Yaakov in garments of safety, so he'd be able to walk in that world. She did so not only for his safety but also to create in him the moral conflict of being someone he was not. God approved of that – Yaakov himself would become deceived and hunted later – and used it to help Yaakov become Yisrael.

Midrash Shir Ami, Toledot 5785:2

Rivkah had discussed many times with Yitzhak the problem of the two boys, and realized that there was no talking to Yitzhak: he was blind, seeing Yaakov as weak and girlish... so he could not hear Rivkah's prophesy from God that Yaakov would have the birthright. Thus, God opened Rivkah's ears to Yitzhak's words to Esav, and told her what to do....

Midrash Shir Ami, Toledot 5785:3

Yitzhak having been bound on the altar, he only could value the masculine trait of physical strength, and thus rejected his son Yaakov. God foresaw this in the womb and strengthened Rivkah with prophesy and capacity to effectuate....

Midrash Shir Ami, Toledot 5785:4

How could Yaakov be a leader of people without physical strength? How could Yaakov become a leader of people when he was positioned by his mother not by his own effort? Rather, he would need to learn to suffer consequences, to develop his own inner strengths and resources – and only after wrestling the angel would he begin to come into his own. Only then could he become Israel. God's prophesy to Rivkah – the stronger would serve the weaker and the elder would serve the younger – means not only the system of primogeniture would be reversed, but also that the strengths of elder wisdom would come to teach the weakness of youth.

Midrash Shir Ami, Toledot 5785:5

God said to Rivkah not that she has two kids in her womb but rather two *nations*. Nations are not morally pure because they are unitary: they are amalgams of peoples and traits. Thus, Yaakov and Esav were collections of energies, no less than Moses was in his day for all of Israel.

Midrash Shir Ami, Toledot 5785:6

Not the word of God alone but the word of the prophet must be fulfilled in our days. So too for Rivkah the Prophet, whose words fulfilled the flow of generations from Avraham to Yitzhak to Yaakov. So too Raheil, who would absent herself from "her" wedding to force Yaakov to grow, struggle and bear the consequence of deception for the sake of purifying himself. We too are children of Prophets – and not just the children of Yaakov but also the children of Esav. And like all prophetic legacies, they are not morally easy: we must wrestle them in our own day.