

CHEVRAH TORAH...5777

With HEART in MIND

MUSSAR Teaching to Transform the Text & Our Lives

Toldot—Genesis 27:1-38

TAHARA—PURITY

...Key KOSHI...

HOW does Esau inform our perspective of Purity?

WHAT does the Jacob—Esau exchange teach us about our assumptions of the foes/others we fear/hold near & dear?



P'SHAT...Studying Torah—Encountering The Word—The Will—The ONE

The truly wise individual is not one who has achieved wisdom but a *talmid chacham*—a wise student...one who is constantly learning—including by observing and reflecting on what can be learned from other people.

27:1) When Isaac had grown old and his eye sight had dimmed, he called his elder son Esau, saying to him, “My son!” “Here I am,!” He answered. 2) “Look now,” said he. “I have grown old, [and] for all I know I may die any day. 3) So pick up your weapons—your quiver and your bow—and go out to the countryside and hunt me some game. 4) Then you can make me tasty dishes such as I like and bring [them] to me and I will eat, so that I can give you my heartfelt blessing before I die.”

5) As Isaac was speaking to his son Esau, Rebekah was listening; and when Esau went to the countryside to hunt for some game to bring [him], 6) Rebekah said this to her son Jacob, “Look—I heard your father speaking to your brother Esau, saying, 7) ‘Bring me game and make me tasty dishes, that I may eat—and [then] bless you before the Eternal before my death.’

8) “Now, son, listen to me, to what I am instructing you: 9) Go to the flock and bring me two tender kids, and I will make them into tasty dishes for your father, such as he likes. 10) You will bring them to your father and he will eat, so that he may bless you before his death.” 11) But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, “Look—my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am a smooth-skinned man; 12) Should my father feel me I will seem to him like a cheat, and I will bring a curse on myself, not a blessing!”

13) His mother then said to him, “Any curse that you get will be on me, son—just listen to me and go get [them] for me!” 14) So he went and got them and brought [them] to his mother, and his mother made tasty dishes, such as his father liked.

15) Rebekah now took the finest of her elder son Esau’s garments that she had in the house, and dressed up her younger son Jacob. 16) The skins of the kids she wrapped on his hands and over the smooth part of his neck 17) and

1 וַיְהִי כִּי־זָקֵן יַצְחָק וַתְּכַהֵן עֵינָיו מִרְאֵת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־
עֵשָׂו אָבִיו בְּנֵוֹ הַגָּדֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הֲנִנִּי׃
2 וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְהֵנָּה זָקַנְתִּי לֹא יָדַעְתִּי יוֹם מוֹתִי׃ 3 וְעַתָּה
שְׂאֵנָה כְּלִיף תְּלִיף וְקִשְׁתְּךָ וְצֵדָה וְצוּדָה לִי צִידָה
[צִיד]׃ 4 וְעָשֵׂה־לִּי מִטְעָמִים כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲהַבְתִּי וְהִבִּיֵּאתָ לִּי
וְאָכַלְתָּ בְּעִבּוֹר תִּבְרַכְךָ נַפְשִׁי בְטָרִם אֲמוֹת׃ 5 וּרְבֵקָה
שָׁמְעַת בְּדַבֵּר יַצְחָק אֲלֵעֵשָׂו בְּנֵוֹ וַיִּלְךָ עֵשָׂו הַשְּׂדֵה לְצוּד
צִיד לְהַבִּיא׃ 6 וּרְבֵקָה אֲמָרָה אֲלֵיעֶקֶב בְּנֵהּ לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה
שָׁמְעַתִּי אֶת־אָבִיךָ מְדַבֵּר אֲלֵעֵשָׂו אֲחִיךָ לֵאמֹר׃
7 הִבִּיֵּאתָ לִּי צִיד וְעָשֵׂה־לִּי מִטְעָמִים וְאָכַלְתָּ וְאַבְרַכְכָּה
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִפְנֵי מוֹתִי׃ 8 וְעַתָּה בְנִי שָׁמַע בְּקֻלִּי לֵאשֶׁר
אָנִי מְצוּהָ אֲתָךְ׃ 9 לָדָנָה אֶל־הַצֹּאן וְקַח־לִּי מִשָּׁם שְׁנֵי
גְדֵי עִזִּים טָבִים וְאַעֲשֵׂה אֹתָם מִטְעָמִים לְאָבִיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר
אָהֵב׃ 10 וְהִבֵּאתָ לְאָבִיךָ וְאָכַל בְּעִבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְרַכְךָ לִפְנֵי
מוֹתוֹ׃ 11 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־רְבֵקָה אִמּוֹ הֲנִן עֹשֶׂו אֲחִי אִישׁ
שָׂעִר וְאֲנֹכִי אִישׁ חֶלֶק׃ 12 אוּלַי יִמְשְׁלֵנִי אָבִי וְהִיִּיתִי
בְּעֵינָיו כַּמִּתְעַתֵּעַ וְהִבֵּאתִי עָלַי קְלָלָה וְלֹא בְרָכָה׃
13 וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִמּוֹ עָלַי קָלַלְתָּךְ בְּנִי אֵךְ שָׁמַע בְּקֻלִּי וְלָךְ
קַח־לִּי׃ 14 וַיִּלְךָ וַיִּקַּח וַיָּבֵא לְאִמּוֹ וַתַּעַשׂ אִמּוֹ מִטְעָמִים
כַּאֲשֶׁר אָהֵב אָבִיו׃ 15 וַתִּקַּח רְבֵקָה אֶת־בְּגָדֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנֵהּ
הַגָּדֹל הַחֲמֹדֹת אֲשֶׁר אֲתָהּ בִּבְיֹתָ וַתִּלְבַּשׂ אֶת־יעֶקֶב בְּנֵהּ
הַקָּטָן׃ 16 וְאֵת עֶרְת גְּדֵי עִזִּים הַלְּבִישָׁה עַל־יָדָיו וְעַל
חֻלְקֹת צוּאָרָיו׃ 17 וַתִּתֵּן אֶת־הַמִּטְעָמִים וְאֶת־הַלֶּחֶם
אֲשֶׁר עָשְׂתָה בְּיַד יַעֲקֹב בְּנֵהּ׃ 18 וַיָּבֵא אֶל־אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר
אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִנִּי מִי אֲתָהּ בְּנִי׃ 19 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־אָבִיו
אֲנֹכִי עֹשֶׂו בְּכֹרֶךָ עֲשִׂיתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר דְּבַרְתָּ אֵלָי קוּם־נָא שָׁבָה
וְאָכַלְתָּ מִצִּידִי בְּעִבּוֹר תִּבְרַכְנִי נַפְשֶׁךָ׃ 20 וַיֹּאמֶר יַצְחָק
אֶל־בְּנֵוֹ מִהֲזֵה מִתְרַתֵּ לְמַצָּא בְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי הִקְרָה יְהוָה
אֶלְהִיךָ לִפְנֵי׃ 21 וַיֹּאמֶר יַצְחָק אֲלֵיעֶקֶב גִּשְׂה־נָּא וְאַמְשֶׁךָ
בְּנִי הֲאֵתָה זֶה בְּנִי עֹשֶׂו אִם־לֹא׃ 22 וַיִּגַּשׂ יַעֲקֹב אֶל־יַצְחָק

she put the tasty food and the bread that she had made into her son Jacob's hand.

18) Going then to his father, he said "Father!" and he replied: "Here I am; which son of mine are you?"

19) Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me; pray get up and sit and eat of my game so that you can give me your heartfelt blessing." 20) Isaac then said to his son: "How is it that you were able to find [game] so quickly, my son?" And he replied, "The Eternal your God made it happen for me." 21) "Pray come near me," said Isaac to Jacob, "so that I can feel you, son. Are you really my son Esau, or are you not?"

22) Jacob approached his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau!" 23) He did not recognize him, however, because his hands were hairy, like the hands of his brother Esau—and as he was [preparing to] bless him, 24) he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" "I am," he answered. 25) He said, "Bring [it] near me and I will eat of my son's game, so that can give you my heartfelt blessing." He brought [it] to him and he ate; he brought him wine and he drank. 26) His father Isaac then said to him, "Pray come near and kiss me, son."

27) As he came near and kissed him, [Isaac] smelled the scent of his clothes and blessed him, saying: "See, my son's scent is like the scent of a field blessed by the Eternal. 28) God give you of heaven's dew, of earth's bounty; abundant grain and new wine. 29) Let peoples serve you, nations bow down to you. Be a ruler to your brothers, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed; may those who bless you be blessed."

30) Just as Isaac finished blessing Jacob, at the very moment that Jacob was in the act of leaving his father Isaac's presence, his brother Esau came in from his hunt. 31) He too made tasty dishes that he brought to his father and he said to his father, "Let my father get ready to eat of his son's game, so that you can give me your heartfelt blessing." 32) But his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So he replied, "I am your son, your first-born, Esau!" 33) Isaac now began to shudder—a shuddering exceedingly great—and he said, "Who then hunted game and brought [it] to me and I ate of it all before you came? I blessed him—and blessed he will remain!" 34) When Esau heard his father's words, he broke into an exceedingly loud and bitter howl and said to his father, "Bless me! Me too, Father!" 35) But he said "Your brother came with deceit and took away your blessing!" 36) He replied, "Is he not named Jacob? Twice now he has cheated me—he took my birthright and now, look, he has taken my blessing!" And he added, "Did you not reserve a blessing for me?" 37) Isaac responded by saying to Esau, "Look—I have appointed him your master, and given him all his kin to be his servants, and have supported him with grain and new wine; come, now, what am I to do, my son?" 38) "Do you have but one blessing, Father?" said Esau to his father. "Bless me! Me, too Father!" And then Esau cried out and wept.

אָבִיו וַיִּמְשְׁהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר הַקֵּל קוֹל יַעֲקֹב וְהִיָּדִים יָדָיו עֲשׂוֹ :
23 וְלֹא הִפִּירוּ כִּי־הָיוּ יָדָיו כִּי־דֵי עֲשׂוֹ אָחִיו שְׁעֵרֶת
וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ : 24 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵתָּה זֶה בְּנִי עֲשׂוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנִי :
25 וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּישָׁה לִּי וְאֶכְלָה מִצֵּיד בְּנִי לְמַעַן תִּבְרַכְךָ נַפְשִׁי
וַיִּגְשֵׁלוּ וַיֹּאכְלֵל וַיָּבֵא לוֹ זֵינ וַיִּשְׁתָּ : 26 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יֶצְחָק
אָבִיו גִּישָׁה־נָּא וּשְׁקָה־לִּי בְּנִי : 27 וַיִּגֶשׁ וַיִּשְׁקֵלוּ וַיֵּרַח אֶת־
רֵיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיִּבְרַכְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר רְאֵה רֵיחַ בְּנִי כְּרֵיחַ שְׂדֵה
אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכְוּ יְהוָה : [ששׁי] 28 וַיִּתְּרֵלָהּ הָאֱלֹהִים מִטַּל
הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְרֹב דָּגָן וְתִירֵשׁ : 29 יַעֲבֹדוּךָ
עַמִּים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ [וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ] לָךְ לְאֲמִים הַיְהוּה גְבִיר לְאֲחִיךָ
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לָךְ בְּנִי אֲמָדָ אַרְרִיךָ אַרְוִיר וּמִבְּרַכְךָ בְּרוּךְ :
30 וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה יֶצְחָק לְבַרְכֵךָ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וַיְהִי אֵד יָצָא
יָצָא יַעֲקֹב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יֶצְחָק אָבִיו וְעֲשׂוֹ אָחִיו בָּא מִצֵּידוֹ :
31 וַיַּעֲשֶׂ גַם־הוּא מִטְעָמִים וַיָּבֵא לְאָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו
יְקֻם אָבִי וַיֹּאכְלֵל מִצֵּיד בְּנֹו בַעֲבַר תִּבְרַכְנִי נַפְשֶׁךָ :
32 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יֶצְחָק אָבִיו מִי־אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנִי בְּנֵךְ בְּרַךְ
עֲשׂוֹ : 33 יִחְרַד יֶצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְדֹלָה עַד־מָאֵד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־
אִפּוּא הוּא הַצֵּד־צֵיד וַיָּבֵא לִי וְאֶכְלֵ מִכֹּל בְּטָרָם תִּבּוּא
וַאֲבַרְכְּהוּ גַם־בְּרוּךְ יְהִיָּה : 34 כַּשֶּׁמֶעַ עֲשׂוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אָבִיו
וַיִּצְעַק צְעָקָה גְדֹלָה וּמְרָה עַד־מָאֵד וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו בְּרַכְנִי
גַם־אָנִי אָבִי : 35 וַיֹּאמֶר בָּא אֲחִיךָ בְּמַרְמָה וַיִּקַּח
בְּרַכְתֶּךָ : 36 וַיֹּאמֶר הֲכִי קָרָא שְׁמוֹ יַעֲקֹב וַיַּעֲקֹבֵנִי זֶה
פְּעַמִּים אֶת־בְּכֹרְתִי לָקַח וְהִנֵּה עַתָּה לָקַח בְּרַכְתִּי וַיֹּאמֶר
הֲלֹא־אֶצְלַתְּ לִי בְרַכָּה : 37 וַלַעַן יֶצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר לְעֲשׂוֹ הֲוּ
גְבִיר שְׁמַתִּיו לָךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־אָחִיו נָתַתִּי לוֹ לְעַבְדִּים וְדָגָן
וְתִירֵשׁ סִמְכַתִּיו וּלְכָה אִפּוּא מָה אַעֲשֶׂה בְּנִי : 38 וַיֹּאמֶר
עֲשׂוֹ אֶל־אָבִיו הַבְּרַכָּה אַחַת הוּא־לָךְ אָבִי בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אָנִי
אָבִי וַיִּשָּׂא עֲשׂוֹ קִלּוֹ וַיִּבֶדְד׃

REMEZ...*Acquiring Torah*...When Torah penetrates our entire being, not just our *seichel/intellect*, this is the acquisition of Torah. —R' Avi Fertig

25:25-6 *The first one emerged red, hairy all over, so they named him Esau. Then his brother emerged, holding onto the heel of Esau, so they called him Jacob.*
N.SARNA... “Admoni” a term also used admiringly of David [I Samuel 16:12] The term, therefore, is not likely to mean redheadedness, which was popularly associated with the sinister and dangerous.

RASHI...I have an aggadic Midrash which interprets according to the *P'shat*: Jacob was grabbing on to Esau by right, in order to prevent him from leaving the womb first. Jacob was formed from the first drop, and Esau from the second. You can demonstrate this yourself. Take a tube whose opening is narrow. Put two stones into the tube. The one that goes in first will come out last...Thus did Jacob come to grasp the heel of Esau so that he would not be considered first by birth, so that he should claim the birthright as his own.

ALSHECH...By allowing Rebecca to complete her pregnancy, each child became complete—TAM. Esau was completely hairy, unlike most humans, and Jacob was completely devoid of impurities, which Esau was full of... “*Jacob held on to his heel*” This detail seems too insignificant to be recorded, yet...the reason he was not AKAV—in the past tense, but rather YA-AKOV—in the future, was to indicate that the Kingdom of God, represented by the Jewish people, would only come to fruition after the Kingdom of Esau has exhausted itself.

27:22-4 *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.” He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy...and so he blessed him...And he said: “Are you my son Esau?” And he said, “I am.”*

OR HaCHAYIM... “*and he blessed him...*” Before Isaac touched Jacob and established that he was Esau, nothing contradicted his impression that it was Jacob’s voice he heard, and so, he was faced by a swindler. Isaac had begun to think along these lines that Jacob had initially been afraid of...The TALMUD reports that when the righteous are looking at someone with displeasure, this inevitably brings a curse in its wake. [Baba Metzia, 84a] Yet Torah reports Isaac blessing Jacob as a result of his hands, teaching us that feeling them, he reversed his erstwhile intentions.

B'REISHIT RABBAH... “*the voice is the voice of Jacob*”—Jacob wields power only by his voice. “*while the hands are the hands of Esau.*” Esau wields dominion only by his hands...But R' Berachiah gave another interpretation: When Jacob speaks wrathfully, the hands of Esau will have dominion; when his voice rings out true to his faith, the hands of Esau will lack dominion.

R.ALTER... “*Are you my son Esau?...*” Doubt still lingers in Isaac’s mind, and so he asks again...As Gerhard von Rad observes, there is one last effort test his son’s identity through the sense of smell. The extent of Rebecca’s cunning is thus fully revealed: one might have wondered why Jacob needed his brother’s garments to appear before a father incapable of seeing them. Now we realize she has anticipated the possibility that Isaac would try to smell Jacob. Prepared for the full cover up, it is Esau’s smell he detects.

27:30 *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.*

N.SARNA... The Narrator’s skill is seen here at its best. No sooner does the tension relax and Jacob withdraw from the stage, than it reaches a new pitch of intensity with Esau’s reappearance on the scene. There is no doubt where the authority of sympathy lies. Esau is the innocent victim of a cruel ruse. This rough fellow, this hardy hunter, is utterly crushed when he discovers what happened...

RASHI...This one left as this one entered. “*Zeh yotseh v'Zeh bah*”...The Text of the REGGIO De CALABRIA edition has the word “ACH” in the heading, thus the “leaving” is limited, implying “*he had just gone out the door.*” According to other earlier editions which omit “ACH” altogether, RASHI’s comment can be seen as referring to the MIDRASH saying: Jacob stood behind the door as Esau was entering, and then left the room behind Esau’s back.

OR HaCHAYIM...The extra words “*VaY'hi Ach Yatsoh*” are meant to draw our attention to the fact that Jacob would not have left had he not noticed that Esau was arriving. This caused Jacob to make a hasty exit. Torah hints at the embarrassment Jacob felt at leaving his father’s presence as if he were a thief beating a hasty retreat.

27:38 *Then Esau said to his father: Have you but one blessing, father? Bless me—even me, father!*” Esau cried out and wept.
And his father answered.

ETZ HAYIM...The Sages regard Esau as a villain and the archetypical anti-Semite, the spiritual ancestor of Imperial Rome and all the other European persecutors of the Jews. Here, however, they sympathize with his tears and his pain at being cheated, and are uncomfortable at Jacob having gained the blessing by fraudulent means. So, the Midrash: “Years later, our people will shed tears for what the descendants of Esau—the Edomites who helped destroy the 1st Temple, and the Romans destroyed the 2nd, did to them—all as retribution for the day Jacob made Esau weep.

D'RASH...*Helping the Heart feel what the Mind understands ...*

ALAN MORINIS...

Traditional Jewish notions of purity and impurity invoke a metaphysical reality that is very different from the bacterially based concept of cleanliness most of us live with today. As far as people go, our default position is to be pure, and its only because of certain circumstances that we are knocked out of that state of affairs...

What the commentators...are concerned with is a kind of spiritual contagion that renders the pure impure on contact. We are pure [according to Torah] until something happens to move us out of that status...

The Mussar teachings illustrate the careful attention we need to pay to the subtleties of our inner workings and our effort to purify them. "Nothing requires greater insight and effort than keeping away from impure motives," writes Rabbi Luzzatto.

He then compares the ideal of a good deed done entirely for its own sake with one where desire for reward has crept in...

...What does purity look and feel like?...The Talmud suggests: The breath of small children engaged in their study in the classroom. The innocent, sweet voices of children reflect the purity we who are years past childhood know and feel still exists in us...Those innocent voices are not alone sweet and pure, they are the glue that keeps the world in existence. What the Sage actually said was: "The world endures only for the sake of the breath of small children." Hearing this, Rav Papa said to Abaye, "What about mine & yours?" Abaye replied: "Breath in which there is such sin is not like the breath in which there is no sin."...It is up to us to look inside and know the difference...How pure are our ideals and our deeds?... [pg 86-88]

Rabbi NORMAN COHEN...

IF we had the impression that Esau was an uncouth hunter whose only concerns were his creature needs and who had only himself to blame for his predicament, that surely is not the case. His very human response elicits our sympathy and we see him as a deeply moving figure, victim of a terrible plot.

Not only do our sympathies lie with Esau; if we are honest with ourselves, we all can identify with him...We all have been there in one way or another...Yes, Esau's painful words are ours: We have uttered them; we have heard them: "What about me, Dad?"...Is it any wonder that we would rather ignore Esau's complaints and remain deaf to his cries?

We identify with the resignation in Isaac's voice when he responds to Esau's pleas, "But I have already made him master over you...What then can I still do for you, my son?" But Isaac does indeed have a blessing left for Esau...[[Self, Struggle & Change](#), pgs 108-110]

SOD...*Helping the soul-light shine...*

Practice focuses on recalibrating the soul-traits that are obstructing your soul's light from shining into your life.

Rabbi JONATHAN SACKS...

As readers, we identify with and feel for Esau. We feel for the Esau whose first thought is not betrayal or desire for revenge but simple, sharp and shocking pain (“Bless me—me too, father”)...Esau’s agonized weeping—all the more poignant given what we know of him, that he is a man of the fields, rough in some ways, impetuous in others, not a man given (as Joseph will later be) to tears. The scene of the two of them together, father and son, deceived and disappointed, robbed of what should have been a moment of great tenderness and intimacy—(son feeding father, father blessing son)—is deeply affecting. We can imagine the painting Rembrandt might have made of it.

...The Torah wants our sympathies to be drawn, throughout the chapter, to Esau rather than to Jacob. It is not that we feel that Esau was the rightful heir of the covenant; that history had taken a wrong turn; that things should have been otherwise. Manifestly, this is not so.... Yet nonetheless, the Torah goes out of its way, using unusual devices of style, to enlist our sympathies with Esau, to make us enter his world and see things from his perspective. Why?

...At the simplest level, there is a humanity here that defies all stereotypes and conventional categorizations. Esau is a child loved by his father and loving him in return. This is so striking that, despite the generally negative evaluation of Esau in the midrashic literature, this fact shines through:

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel said: no man ever honored his father as I did mine, yet I found that Esau honored his father even more than I did. [Devarim Rabbah, 1:15]

The Esau who emerges from the Torah has none of Abraham’s faith, Isaac’s steadfastness or Jacob’s persistence. He is carved of an altogether coarser grain. But he is not without his humanity, his filial loyalty and a decent if quick-tempered disposition.... This too is part of the Torah’s message. Just as we cannot predict God’s actions in advance (“I will be who I will be,”)...so we cannot predict in advance where God’s image will shine in the affairs of mankind.

...There is, however, something far more fundamental at stake in the story of Esau. It has to do with the very concept of chosenness itself. The book of Genesis is, among other things, a profound meditation on what it is to be chosen and what it is not to be chosen... Love chooses. But choice creates estrangement, which leads to tension, which can sometimes erupt into conflict and violence—potential or actual...

The choice of one does not mean the rejection of another. Esau is not chosen, but he is also not rejected. He too will have his blessing, his heritage, his land. He too will have the children who become kings, who will rule and not be ruled. He too will have his virtues recognized, above all his love and respect for his father. The Torah is saying for all time to all humanity—not all are chosen for the rigors, spiritual and existential, of the Abrahamic covenant, but *all* are precious to God...

To be chosen does not mean that others are *unchosen*. To be secure in one’s relationship with God does not depend on negating the possibility that others too may have a (different) relationship with the Holy One. Jacob was loved by his mother, Esau by his father; but what of God who is neither father nor mother but both and more than both?

Am I loved more than my brothers or sisters? Less? Once asked, the question cannot but lead to sibling rivalry...But the question is not a valid question. It should not be asked. A good parent loves all his or her children and never thinks of more or less. Love is not quantifiable. It rejects comparisons. Jacob is Jacob, heir to the covenant. Esau is Esau, doing what he does, being what he is, enjoying his own heritage and blessing.

What a simple truth, and how beautifully, subtly, it is conveyed.

It is one of the Torah's most profound messages to humanity—and how deeply, in an age of “the clash of civilizations,” the world needs to hear it today.

[From *Covenant & Conversation: Genesis*, pgs. 168-175]

From I Know Four

Amy Blank

III.

Now that I am big with child

--so big, I think with twins—

I chuckle: will our silence be maintained?

Womanhood is set on me, I have grown strong,

And I will hold two tumbling sons in check whilst Isaac dreams—

Yes, and sometimes shrieks in dream,

(What was done to him?

He does not say...) When he wakes

he goes into the fields

listens to the bubbling well

the ewe calling from the hill,

the wind...and he is comforted.

I will be mother—and father too—to those hotheaded sons.

(I feel them kicking, struggling

in the womb.) They will be silent

before Isaac.

IV.

Jacob and Esau grown...

Jacob is Isaac's son in tenderness;

for this I love him.

And Esau in lustiness is mine;

Isaac loves him for this.

Isaac, blind and patient

is fulfilled in blessing.

I stole the blessing.

I sent Jacob to Haran,

I saved Esau from Cain's sin.

Though I yearn for Jacob

and tremble for his return

I am still strong enough

to draw this house together.

The tent chords must not slacken;

I will hold taut.

...PRACTICE...

CONSIDER your daily motivations to do what you do...

ASK yourself: How pure are my ideals?

WHAT stands in the way of my purity of thought/action?

...Journal a “NOTE-2-SELF”....

Cleaning up your act means reviewing your motivations...

...Just how PURE are my intentions?....