



**“But I Didn’t Do Anything Wrong”
Toldot 2021**

What strategies are used to explain why Jacob coerced Esau into selling the birthright and why Rebecca and Jacob tricked Isaac?

Breishit 25:29-34

<p>Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open, famished. And Esau said to Jacob, “Give me some of that red stuff to gulp down, for I am famished...Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” And Esau said, “I am at the point of death, so of what use is my birthright to me?” But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Jacob then gave Esau bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, and he rose and went away. Thus did Esau spurn the birthright.</p>	<p>וַיָּזַד יַעֲקֹב תִּיד וַיָּבֵא עֵשָׂו מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עֵיִף וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הֲלֵעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן־הָאֵדָם הָאֵדָם הַזֶּה כִּי עֵיִף...וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב מִכֶּהָה כִּי־אֶת־בְּכֻרְתְּךָ לִי: וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו הֲנִה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת וְלִמָּה־זֶה לִי בְכֻרָה: וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב הַשְּׂבֻעָה לִי כִּי־אֶת־בְּכֻרְתְּךָ לִי וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ וַיִּמְכֹּר אֶת־בְּכֻרְתוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב: וַיַּעֲקֹב נָתַן לְעֵשָׂו לֶחֶם וְיַיִד עֲדָשִׁים וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׂתֵּי וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבַּז עֵשָׂו אֶת־הַבְּכֻרָה:</p>
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Breishit 27:32-36

<p>His father Isaac said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your son, Esau, your first-born!” 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!” When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst into wild and bitter sobbing, and said to his father, “Bless me too, Father!” But he answered, “Your brother came with guile and took away your blessing.”...Esau said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”</p>	<p>וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִצְחָק אֲבִיו מִי־אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי בְנֶךָ בְּכֻרְךָ עֵשָׂו: וַיִּחַרד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד־מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אֵלּוּא הוּא הַצֹּדֵי־צִיד וַיָּבֵא לִי וְאֲכַל מִכָּל בְּטָרָם תִּבּוּא וְאֲבָרַכְהוּ: גַּם־בְּרוּךְ יְהִי: כַּשְּׂמַע עֵשָׂו אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אָבִיו וַיִּצְעַק צָעֲקָה גְּדֹלָה וּמָרָה עַד־מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו בְּרַכְנִי גַם־אֲנִי אָבִי: וַיֹּאמֶר בָּא אַחִיךָ בְּמַרְמָה וַיִּקַּח בְּרַכְתְּךָ...וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלֹא־אֶצְלַת לִי בְרַכָּה:</p>
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Breishit 25:23

<p>G-d’s word to her was, “Two nations are in your womb. Two governments will separate from inside you. The upper hand will go from one government to the other. The greater one will serve the younger.”</p>	<p>וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לָהּ, שְׁנֵי גֵיִים בְּבֶטְנְךָ, וּשְׁנֵי לְאֻמִּים, מִמֵּעַיִן יִפְרְדוּ; וְלֹאִם מִלְּאִם יִאֲמָץ, וְרֵב יַעֲבֹד צְעִיר.</p>
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Bava Batra 16b

R. Johanan said: That wicked Esau committed five sins on that day. He dishonored a betrothed maiden, he committed a murder, he denied G-d, he denied the resurrection of the dead, and he spurned the birthright. We know that he dishonored a betrothed maiden, because it is written here, And Esau came in from the field (Breishit 25:19) and it is written in another place in connection with the betrothed maiden, He found her in the field (Devarim 22:27). We know that he committed murder, because it is written here that he was faint, and it is written in another place, Woe is me now, for my soul faints before the murderers (Yirmeyahu 4:31). We know that he denied G-d, because it is written here, What benefit is this to me, and it is written in another place, This is my God and I will make him an habitation (Shmot 15:2). We know that he denied the resurrection of the dead because he said, Behold, I am on the way to die: also that he spurned the birthright because it is written, So Esau despised his birthright.

אמר רבי יוחנן חמש עבירות עבר אותו רשע באותו היום בא על נערה מאורסה והרג את הנפש וכפר בעיקר וכפר בתחיית המתים ושט את הבכורה בא על נערה מאורסה כתיב הכא ויבא עשו מן השדה וכתיב התם כי בשדה מצאה הרג את הנפש כתיב הכא עיף וכתיב התם אוי נא לי כי עיפה נפשי להורגים וכפר בעיקר כתיב הכא למה זה לי וכתיב התם זה אלי ואנוהו וכפר בתחיית המתים דכתיב הנה אנכי הולך למות ושט את הבכורה דכתיב ויבז עשו את הבכורה

R. Hirsch Breishit 25:34

Both of them were still just boys...15 years old. So...the birthright could only have been sold in boyish play.

R. Hirsch Breishit 27:1

...Only if the inevitable discovery of her act had been part of Rebecca's calculations can all her actions make any sense...Esau...had married two Hittite women. If anything could have opened Isaac's eyes to his eldest son's utter unworthiness, this act of his should certainly have done so...Isaac...decided to give...a blessing but...had been kept from doing so. Perhaps Rebecca had been stalling for time...in the hope that...she would manage to bring about Isaac's disillusionment...What, then, was she to do now...except to demonstrate to him...that he was susceptible to deception...If even Jacob, a single-minded man, could pose before him as a mighty hunter, how much easier would it be for Esau to pose as a single-minded man...As soon as Isaac realized he had been tricked, he was seized with terror...He saw how he had been deceived all his life.



Etz Chaim Breishit 25:29

The reader may wonder why Jacob exacts a price for the stew rather than act like a brother and give Esau what he needs. Jacob may resent Esau's privileges, based on his being older by a matter of minutes.

Amy K. Blank, He Knew

Think you he was so easily misled
That blindness made confusion possible
Between the son he thought he loved and him
Whom he must bless?... He blessed because he must,
Because G-d wrought in him. At such a time
Could our chap trickery prevail? He knew.
This was the blessing of the chosen son,
Cross-purposed and reversing, it might seem,
The destiny of generations; strange
And repetitious are G-d's ways with man.



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