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JACOB AND ESAU
A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE MIDRASH

Scott M. Sperling

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of Requirements for
Ordination

Hebrew Union College
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Yet, despite all of this help, I take full responsibility for all that is contained in this thesis. I have been given direction and ideas. If I have erred in the interpretation and furtherance of these ideas, then I must accept those errors as my own.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is based on a methodology developed by Rabbi Stuart A. Gertman in his unpublished thesis, entitled Moses and Israel: A Study in Comparative Midrash. The methodology is designed to demonstrate how redactors chose midrashim in individual collections which fit the needs of the redactors, viz. the material's relevance to them and to their readers. Gertman's thesis dealt with the collections known as Midrash Ha-Gadol and Yalkut Shimoni. This thesis deals with those same two collections, as well as Bereshit Rabba. The inclusion of the material from Bereshit Rabba is, in a sense, tangential to the analysis of the material from the other two collections. Its role is as a contrast, as well as a comparison to the material in the other two collections. Gertman quotes from Herman Strack, when he states that "the strictly productive midrashic activity ceased very soon after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud; thereafter came the period of assembling which lasted until the end of the Gaonate (1040CE) and even beyond that date."¹ Bereshit Rabba is generally conceded to be the most ancient of the midrashic compilations, and hence has value in showing the roots of the other two midrashic collections. It has an additional purpose in this thesis. I have chosen a section from the Book of Genesis dealing with the relationship of Jacob and Esau, from their birth to the sale of Esau's birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:22-34). The image of Esau/Edom/Rome

had special significance for the compilers of Bereshit Rabba, as it did for the compiler of Yalkut Shimoni. It will be argued that this relationship is central to our understanding of the differences between the material in Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Ha-Gadol. For these reasons, it has been deemed necessary to include, for the reader's benefit, the material in Bereshit Rabba.

Gertman concludes that flowing from the observation of Strack is the principle that: "the collections of midrashim that are in our possession are drawn from the same source material, viz. that which was composed before the close of the Babylonian Talmud. It is from this material that the various collectors and redactors chose midrashim to fit their need and context, carefully rejecting material not relevant to them or their readers. Since the same material was available to all of them, it is not surprising that we find similar choices, reflecting minor rather than major differences."² This thesis is devoted to showing how these differences manifest themselves in the treatment of the characters of Jacob and Esau in Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Ha-Gadol, following the methodological guidelines that Gertman established.

The text of Midrash Ha-Gadol is that edited by Mordecai Margolioth, published by Mosad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1947. The text of Yalkut Shimoni is the new critical edition which was edited by Rabbi Isaac Shiloni, and printed by Mosad ha-Rav

Kook, Jerusalem, 1973. The material from Bereshit Rabba is taken from the English translation printed by Soncino Press (London, 1961). The text of the translations of the material from the other two collections which have been included in the body of the thesis are my own. Both Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Ha-Gadol are cited by page number, and the material from Bereshit Rabba is cited by chapter and paragraph number of the Soncino edition.

In addition, it must be pointed out that the historical precises of the Jewish communities of Yemen and Germany in the thirteenth century are condensations of more lengthy chapters in Rabbi Gertman's thesis. This holds true to lesser degree in the following paragraphs on the historical background of the two midrashic collections, Midrash Ha-Gadol and Yalkut Shimoni. In the initial stages of my research, I covered much the same ground as did Rabbi Gertman in pursuing the origins of these collections. I have chosen, owing to limitations of time and space, not to include the historical background of Bereshit Rabba. The importance of this collection lies in its reflection of the issue of Esau/Edom/Rome. In the chapter dealing with the analysis of the midrashic material, it is hoped that whatever relevant historical material there is can best be brought to bear at that time.

Despite a continuing argument, the weight of scholarly evidence is on the side of the authorship of Yalkut Shimoni

being Rabbi Shimon ha-Darshan, in the city of Frankfurt-on-Main in the first half of the thirteenth century.³ The compiler of Yalkut Shimoni collects midrashim from all sources before him, identifies them, and orders them.⁴ The fact that there have been mistakes in the text as it passed through the centuries is of little real concern to us. Modern editors have attempted to correct these mistakes by the process of sifting through various manuscripts. However, no arguments in this thesis are based on word order or specific nuance. In a few, isolated cases, there are some important differences based on differing versions of a similar exegetical comment. In the main, the arguments are based on the presence or absence of certain midrashim.

Midrash Ha-Gadol has been argued about extensively in scholarly literature. There have been arguments concerning its place of origin, its date and its authorship. Contemporary scholarly opinion agrees that it was compiled in the thirteenth century, by Rabbi David b. Amram of Aden.⁵

In presenting his arguments for the correctness of his methodology, Gertman successfully shows that the compilers of Midrash Ha-Gadol and Yalkut Shimoni were influenced only by their point of view. This point of view was, of course, shaped by the context of their culture and the needs of the people to whom they were addressing their midrashic compilations. It is the intent of this thesis to further this process. The chapter

of analysis is intended to show, in particular, how the cultural context affected the view of Jacob and Esau in the midrashic collections. This methodology strives to help the understanding of not only the rabbinic mind, but also the development of Judaism and its adaptation to the changing moods of the world in which it was thrust.⁶

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Herman Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and the Midrash, New York: 1931, p. 203.
2. Stuart Gertman, Moses and Israel: A Study in Comparative Midrash, unpublished thesis, MUC-JIR N.Y., 1973, p. 1.
3. Leopold Zunz, Hadrashot b'Yisrael, Jerusalem: 1847, p. 148; cf. The Jewish Encyclopedia (1924), Vol. XII, p. 585; Strack, p. 230; Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. XVI, p. 971, p. 707; A. Epstein, Midrashaniyot HaYehudim, Vol. 2, Jerusalem: 1957, pp. 334-35, 335, 294.
4. Gertman, p. 2.
5. Ibid, p. 3.
6. Ibid, p. 5.

CHAPTER ONE

The Jewish Community of Germany in the Early Thirteenth Century

The first half of the thirteenth century was dominated by two great personalities: Pope Innocent III and Fredrick II of the Hohenstaufen dynasty.¹ It was clearly a time of both great change and great upheaval in Europe. It was a time that may best be characterized by the struggles for power that evidenced themselves in all sectors of the society. The degree of conflict between the Church and the Emperor, the Emperor and the feudal lords and princes, and the feudal lords and the growing ranks of the bourgeoisie, created a context for the Jews of increased uncertainty.

Innocent III was ably suited to the task of fighting for the unity and supremacy of the Church. He was a great administrator, statesman and diplomat.² Using all of his skills, he sought to reorganize the Church, and in great part succeeded. He greatly extended the influence of the Church.

The state of the Holy Roman Empire reflected little of the vigor of the Church. It may be said, in fact, that when Fredrick took over the reins of power, he did so under deplorable conditions. At that time, the Empire was merely a conglomeration of semi-independent princedoms, with restrictions on the royal princes, interlocking jurisdictions, and piecemeal and fragmentary powers.³ Fredrick was able to take this situation and to make

major changes. He was able to coalesce these disparate principalities into a more centralized political entity. Despite Fredrick's successes in Germany, he was forced to defend his rights in Italy, and then return to Germany where his son attempted to usurp his authority. Following his death in 1250, the kingdom devolved to a period of interregnum. Fredrick's desire for a hereditary monarchy clearly fell by the boards.⁴

As is perhaps always the case, the political developments of the thirteenth century were in great measure a result of economic developments. This century was a time of fundamental restructuring of society, in Germany and elsewhere. The population shifted to fill in many of the spaces that had made travel and commerce difficult in previous times. Owing its origins largely to an increase in trade, a middle class in the urban areas developed. This revival of trade brought about the banding together of groups; merchants and artisans. The towns had to expand to meet their needs.

The great mass of landless men were the well from which these new groups were drawn. Many were younger sons who could not inherit their father's lands, and many were freed serfs.

There was an attendant change in the nature of the rural classes. The old manorial system had to give way in the face of the demands of the new towns. Permanent markets became the way of life, as opposed to the old system of production and consumption at the same place. This was a natural, and immediate

need when the towns began to demand the country produce that was essential to their existence.⁵

The new merchant class was able to demand and get three basic things from their rulers: the freedom to come and go as they pleased in pursuit of their trade; a law that was able to cope with commerce; and administrative autonomy for the purpose of defense, municipal organization, and taxation.⁶ The princes of the Middle Ages soon came to realize the efficacy of aligning themselves with the new mercantilism. Increased revenues resulted from tolls, sales of agricultural products, and various taxes. This trend of development was viewed with alarm and trepidation by the Church. The commercialism of the towns spelled losses in many areas for the Church. The Church gave up some of its power as money-lender, and many bishops found themselves losing administrative control and hence an overall loss of power for the Church. Of course, the rise in power of the monarch meant loss of power and a further loss in the battle with the Empire.

What was good for Europe and its developing economy was not particularly good for the Jews of Germany in the thirteenth century.⁷ Feudalism had given the Jews a measure of prosperity and security. As mercantilism developed in Europe, the position of the Jews in society eroded. The Christian merchants squeezed the Jews out of this sector of the economy. The Jews were transformed from economic agents endowed with full rights

and worthy of protection, into objects of economic policy, in need of protection.⁸ As the Jew became a dispensable rather than an indispensable commodity, he was forced to seek a livelihood in other pursuits. This meant that they had to move into areas not regulated by the guilds, and money-lending. High taxes and imposts doomed the Jews to economic impoverishment.⁹ Usury was not terribly lucrative for the Jews; they paid high taxes on their profits.

It was the influence of religious-national antagonism which developed with the political turmoil, rather than the status of the Jews as money-lenders, that led to the mass movement against the Jews. The Church, in ideological terms, was in a quandary over the Jews.¹⁰ They were God-ordained witnesses and hence could not be destroyed. Yet they were enemies of the faith, and so had to be segregated and subjected to degradation. The potential for rectifying this problem in conversion had its own set of problems. In the main, it was an economic issue. Due to Church policy on money-lending, the Jews played the major role in that industry. They paid a lot of taxes to the Church from their profits. This revenue could be lost to the Church if the Jews were converted en masse, unless the policy of the Church about money-lending changed. So, at least in ideology, the Jews were given protection of life and limb, had freedom to worship, and could not be forced to convert. The conflict between the Church and Fredrick II

forced the Church to promulgate doctrines, such as those from the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which segregated the Jews from the general population. As Fredrick's power grew, so grew the poor treatment of the Jews at the hands of the Church. Fredrick declared himself to be the protector of the Jews in the year 1236. His declaration of them as 'servi camera nostrae' put everyone on notice that he 'owned' the Jews. This protection meant further reduction of their freedom, and placed them in a more dependent position. It further exacerbated their position vis-a-vis the Church, as noted above. Protection in return for taxes was sometimes transferred to individual feudal lords or bishops in individual localities. In return, the bishop or lord would pay certain amounts to the king, passing the tax burden back to the Jews. This provided for a degree of non-uniformity in the way Church decrees were dealt with in certain places. Time and again, the Jews were played off between Church and Emperor, Emperor and individual lord, and local authorities and the masses.

The effect of the surroundings had a profound effect on the Jewish community. They were as effected by their environment as by the tradition. The class structure was relatively simple. There were no wide gaps. All shared the same world of ideas, and delegated power to the rabbi. The rabbi had local authority, except in such cases where he had won a larger following through his reputation. With the exception of the communities of Speyer,

Worms and Mayence, the effort at extended alliances were of minimal effect.

The internal organization of the Jewish community was democratic. Tax-paying members of the community elected representatives. These assemblies, besides electing the necessary officers, parnassim, cantors and gabbaim, fulfilled other functions. They established funds for charity, formed committees to build or repair houses of worship and ensured that the Jews of the community followed its rules.

The German-Jewish communities had little interest in secular scholarship or sciences. The fight over the teaching of Maimonides typified the style of the German communities. For to accept the law code of Maimonides was to favor a centralized halachic system. This was in direct opposition to the importance of local minhagim and the system of pilpul that characterized both Germany and France at that time.

The Yalkut Shimoni was clearly a product of the rabbinate and not of the mystical Hasidim. The Yalkut Shimoni was an encyclopedic collection of midrashim compiled by Simon of Frankfurt.¹¹ It was a work which reaffirmed the spirit of the rabbis, grounding it in the midrashim of the past and the halacha which governed the community.¹² It was clearly an establishment document.

The German-Jewish community in the first half of the thirteenth century was, community by community, a fairly compact

organization of Jewish life. Despite the problems imposed on it from the outside, it managed to remain fairly stable. Within their fairly cohesive communities, they retained their identity, while passing on their faith to their children. The history of the German Jews of the thirteenth century is the history of a people in transition, caught in circumstances not of their own making, and which they would not live to see resolved.¹⁴

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Stuart A. Gertman, Moses and Israel: A Study in Comparative Midrash, unpublished thesis, HUC-JIR N.Y., 1973, p. 7.
2. C. W. Previte-Orton, The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. II, Cambridge: 1952, p. 645.
3. Ibid, p. 682.
4. Marc Bloch, Land and Work in Medieval Europe, Vol. VI, New York: 1929, pp. 684-89.
5. Marc Bloch, Feudal Society, Vol. II, Chicago: 1964, pp. 50ff.
6. Ibid, p. 55.
7. Gertman, p. 15.
8. Guido Kisch, The Jew in Medieval Germany, Chicago: 1949, p. 130.
9. Pirenne pp. 133-34 of Israel Abrahams, Jewish Life in the Middle Ages, New York: 1960, pp. 249-51, 213-15.
10. Gertman, p. 18.
11. "Yalkut Shimoni" in Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. XVI, pp. 707ff.
12. Gertman, p. 28.
13. Ibid, p. 30.
14. Ibid, p. 30.

CHAPTER TWO

The Jewish Community of Yemen in the First Half of the Thirteenth Century

The history of Yemen in the thirteenth century is not a subject dealt with widely by scholars of the Moslem world.¹ We have information concerning the conquests of Yemen in the twelfth century and then again in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when it comes into the British sphere of influence. We have little detail on the life of the people of Yemen, both political and social. We also lack information about the Jews of Yemen after the death of Maimonides.² In order to understand the context of Midrash Ha-Gadol, it is necessary to generalize from the scarce amount of available information, and to make assumptions from the period just prior to its time of authorship, i.e. the last half of the twelfth century, a time when more information is available. This is fairly safe ground, since the life in Yemen, though politically tumultuous, was governed by the same forces in the first half of the thirteenth century as it was in the latter half of the twelfth century.³

Yemen is located in the southern portion of the Arabian peninsula. It is bounded by the Gulf of Aden on the south, the Red Sea on the west, the mountain range known as Hejaz and the Arabian desert on the north, and the province of Hadramut on the east. The country is naturally divided into

two sections: the low country which is parallel to the sea coast, and the interior mountainous region between it and the Arabian desert. The coastal land is generally poor and without much rain. The mountainous region, by contrast, was of the finest and most fertile in that part of the peninsula. It is widely known for both its agricultural produce and the export of other trade items.

Commercial relations between Yemen and Syria had existed since ancient days, but its commerce became more important in the Middle Ages. Aden, the chief seaport, became a center for trade. Vast amounts of wealth flowed into Yemen, and found its chief outlet in Aden.

The capital city of Yemen was Sana. Like the rest of Yemen, it led a stormy political career in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The life of Sana was the life of Yemen, and this was particularly true for the Jews, many of whom lived in the capital city.⁴

In Yemen, as in Europe, the Jews were buffeted between political-religious factions. They were caught between the two sects, Sunnis and Zaidite Shiites. The Sunnis were primarily in the lowlands, the Zaidite Shiites in the highlands. Except when there was a foreign conqueror, the Zaidites were in control of Yemen almost throughout its history. The Jews, who were caught in the middle, were used, then attacked by both sides.⁵

In 1173 Saladin conquered the Fatimid Empire in Egypt. It is unclear exactly what took place after Saladin sent his brother to conquer Yemen. The weight of evidence seems to be in favor of the theory that there was an independent dynasty established in Yemen after 1229. This seems most likely, since Saladin and his successors ruled Egypt until the middle of the thirteenth century, and probably retained control of Yemen as well.

The Jews of Yemen suffered under the rule of Saladin. His Sunni regime inflamed the Shiites in Yemen, who some years before had tried to force conversion on the Jews of Yemen. This sort of harassment continued throughout the thirteenth century and made life for the Jews extremely difficult. There were both political and religious reasons for these problems. While the majority of orthodox Moslems were fairly tolerant of the Jews, fanatical sects such as the Shiites brought tragedy to the Jews. The political turmoil in the country brought with each new regime adverse repercussions.

That the Jewish community of Yemen is ancient is clear, but the exact date of its beginning is unclear. Despite this cloudiness, the Jews were probably in Yemen before the common era. They never fully lost contact with the mainstream of the Jewish world. They had contact with the communities of Babylonia, and asked for legal decisions. They knew the literature

of the Babylonian Jews, including the commentary of Saadyah and the liturgy of the Babylonian rabbis. They also felt a strong tie to the Land of Israel and were in communication with the scholars there throughout the Middle Ages.⁷

Their main source of contact was Maimonides in the twelfth century. They turned to him whenever the community was in trouble. They turned to Maimonides both when there was a decree forcing conversion, and also when there arose a false messiah. As Yemen gained in trade and economic importance in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so too did the importance of their contact with Maimonides.

It is clear that whatever their state of learning in earlier periods of life in Yemen, the Jews of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a learned group.⁸ Razahbi points out that learning was not just the domain of the few, it was of the many. The synagogue, which was the center of their life, was also a center for learning. Gertman assumes, most reasonably, that their high state of learning reflects the attitude of the Zaidites, who placed great value on education.

A false messiah appeared around 1172, generating a severe crisis for the Jews of Yemen. The ground had been prepared for him by attempts at conversion and other troubles which had struck the Jews. His influence was great and brought additional problems, for he threatened the Yemenite power structure.⁹ The leadership of the Jewish community appealed to Maimonides for

help. He took action both with his Iggeret Tayman and in the political arena. In his letter, he advised the Jews to deal strongly with the imposter, and to maintain their faith. It is also thought that he interceded on the behalf of the Yemenite Jews with the Vizir of Saladin, who was his patient.¹⁰ Though of this we can not be certain.

The community was sharply divided over the argument surrounding Maimonides' doctrine of resurrection. The supporters of Maimonides eventually won.

The Jews of Yemen were principally craftsmen of every kind, and in many trades they enjoyed a monopoly.¹¹ Some Jews were merchants. Some were physicians, with great reputations. Gertman points out that we can draw no definite conclusions about either the relative wealth of the Jews, or their social status. He points out that they sent generous gifts to both Babylonia and to Maimonides. Yet, they had few rights within the society at large. They were governed by a sect bent on converting them. Despite all of this, they did maintain their identity as Jews, and they clearly flourished in the area of Jewish learning. The hardships of which they complained were political and not social or economic, and, perhaps because of Maimonides' intervention, their lot seemed to improve somewhat in the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹²

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Gertman, p. 36.
2. Yehuda Razahbi, Yahadut Tayman, Tel Aviv: 1953, p. 60.
cf. Moshe Zadoc, Yehuday Tayman, Tel Aviv: 1967,
Introduction.
3. Gertman, p. 36.
4. Ibid, p. 33.
5. Zadoc, p. 43.
6. Gertman, p. 40.
7. Razahbi, p. 20.
8. Gertman, p. 43.
9. Razahbi, p. 22; Zadoc, p. 89; cf. "Yemen" in
Encyclopedia Judaica.
10. Razahbi, p. 59.
11. Gertman, p. 44.
12. Ibid, p. 45

CHAPTER THREE

Esau/Edom/Rome: The Historical Background

Central to our understanding of the differences in the treatment of Jacob and Esau in Bereshit Rabba/Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Ha-Gadol is the identification in the former of Esau/Edom/Rome, and the absence of the identification with Rome in the latter. In order to gain this understanding, let us briefly trace how this associative process began and came to fruition.

In the Bible, Esau was called Edom on the day that he sold his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:30). The country which was later inhabited by Esau and his descendents was called "the field of Edom" (Gen. 32:3), or "the land of Edom" (Gen. 36:16, Num. 33:37). The country had previously been called Mount Seir (Gen. 36:8). According to Josephus, this was because of the hairy nature of Esau, despite the fact that according to Gen. 14:6 it had been called that long before the birth of Esau.¹ These are but brief examples.

Contemporary scholars agree that the identification of Esau with Rome is not to be found during the Second Temple period, nor is it to be found, as some have argued, in the Apocalypse of Ezra.² Rather, they see the comment in Bereshit Rabba 65:21 as being the initial example of this equation. R. Akiba, no less, comments on Gen. 27:22. He states that the voice of Jacob is, in fact, the anguished cry of Jacob, because of what Esau

had done to him. Cohen states that "The meaning of Esau is here clear and unequivocal."³ Cohen points out further passages where Akiba identifies Edom with Rome, as they related to Bar Kochba and the revolt against Rome.⁴ For other rabbis, it became easy to follow R. Akiba's example. They had only to take other passages that dealt with Edom and apply them to Rome. R. Meir goes so far as to interpret Is. 21:11, "The vision of Dumah," with Dumah becoming Rome. Also we have the comment on Is. 34:7 in which re-emim (wild oxen) is read as Romans, in the Pesikta de Rav Kahana 7:11 (ed. Mandlebaum).⁵

Cohen, however, raises the question of why Rome was identified with Edom in the first place. He points out that Edom was clearly of Semitic origin and that the dispersion of the Jews with which the Biblical text charges them was not as strenuous as others. Further, the Romans had been generally seen as descended from the Kittim, offspring of Japheth.⁶ Yet, given the historical events of that age, it is clear why this identification took place. For as Cohen so aptly puts it, "Scripture named Edom, and history pointed at Rome. By the most elementary syllogism, the two became one." Heineman emphasizes this last point. He indicates that the rabbis recognized that there was a cosmic opposition between the two nations of Jacob and Esau. It was a spiritual opposition, which included Rome as the personification of military might.⁷ Both Heineman and Cohen agree that whatever positive comments were to be found in

the aggada about Rome were "ad hoc concessions"⁸ and Heineman specifically points out that the aggada may have played on Esau fulfilling the commandment of honoring his father as an explanation of how Rome acquired what it did.⁹

During the Middle Ages, the Roman Empire was very much alive to the Jews. They looked about them and saw that they suffered at the hands of Christendom's Holy Roman Empire scarcely less than its predecessor in more ancient times. "Esau might exchange his eagle for a cross, but he was Esau nonetheless."¹⁰ What emerges from observation of Jewish literature of the Middle Ages is that there was an important eschatological impact of this historical circumstance. The Christian scholars took the symbolism of the Jews to heart and attempted to turn it back on the Jews. It became essential for this Jewish symbolism to be defended and made valid in the face of this Christian polemic. Hence we find this extraordinary literary effort in the Middle Ages to shore up and somehow vindicate the Rabbinic symbolism. These efforts took two major tacts. The first was in such documents as the Jossipon. The Jossipon was an abridgement and adaptation of Josephus, written in Hebrew, by a Jew of Southern Italy. It was most likely composed in 953.¹¹ The intent of the Jossipon was, in fact, to establish the lineage of Romulus (the founder of Rome) as linking him directly to Esau's grandson, Zepho, and hence, explaining the conflict between Rome and Israel. The second category of polemic endeavor

is the compilation of midrashim, such as Yalkut Shimoni.

Those who came under Moslem influence took an entirely different approach. They rejected the identification of Rome with Edom on the grounds that Romans were the descendents of the Biblical Kittim, who were in turn of Greek origin. As Cohen points out, this reversed the process of identifying Edom/Rome/Christianity. The theory ran that Jesus was not the father of Christianity, but rather, long after his death, the pagan priests of Edom persuaded Constantine to adopt Christianity and to make it the religion of his empire.¹² The operative factor is that this theory removed Christianity from the realm of the political and put it only in theological terms. So, for the Jews living in Moslem lands, the fourth monarchy of Daniel's vision became that of Ishmael, or a partnership of Edom and Ishmael (Islam). In a note, Cohen mentions that there was a strong tradition in the Yemenite anthologies (Midrash Ha-Gadol being one) of the exclusive dominion of Ishmael/Islam of that same fourth kingdom.

It is clear that the Jews of Moslem countries had different concerns than their co-religionists in Christian countries. From Saadia, Ibn Aqin, Ibn Ezra and Maimonides they received a different polemical framework. For them, Rome was of less immediate concern. As we will view in the different collections of midrashim, these concerns manifested themselves in specific and easily recognizable patterns as they weave their exegetical comments on the life of Jacob and Esau.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. V, p. 40.
2. Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. VI, p. 858; cf. Gerson Cohen, Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought, in Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies, ed. Alexander Altmann, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 21.
3. Cohen, p. 22.
4. Ibid.
5. Encyclopedia Judaica, p. 380.
6. Cohen, p. 23.
7. Isaac Heineman, Darkay Ha-Aggada, Judah Magnes Press, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1950, pp. 32ff.
8. Cohen, p. 27.
9. Heineman, pp. 32ff.
10. Cohen, p. 29.
11. D. Flusser, The Author of the Book of Josiphon: His Personality and His Age, Zion, 18:05, 1953.
12. Cohen, p. 46.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Biblical Texts

The translation of the Biblical text is taken from The Holy Scriptures of the Jewish Publication Society (Philadelphia, 1955).

Genesis 25:22-34

And the children struggled together within her; and she said: 'If it be so, wherefore do I live?' And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her: Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels; And the one people shall be stronger than the other people; And the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came forth ruddy, all over like a hairy mantle; and they called his name Esau. And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob. And Isaac was three-score years old when she bore them. And the boys grew; and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; and Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage; and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob: 'Let me swallow, I pray thee, some of this red, red pottage; for I am faint.' Therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said: 'Swear to me first;' and he swore unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. And Jacob gave

Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. So Esau despised his birth-right.

CHAPTER FIVE

Genesis 25:22-34

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED TOGETHER

Bereshit Rabba 63:6

WITHIN HER (Gen. 25:22) R. Johanan and Resh Lakish discussed this. R. Johanan said: Each ran to slay the other. Resh Lakish said: Each annulled the laws of the other. R. Derekiah observed in R. Levi's name: Do not think that only after issuing into the light of the world was he (Esau) antagonistic to him, but even while still in his mother's womb his fist stretched out against him: thus it is written, THE WICKED STRETCH OUT THEIR FISTS FROM THE WOMB (Ps. 58:4).

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED TOGETHER WITHIN HER.

They sought to run within her. When she stood near synagogues or schools, Jacob struggled to come out; hence it is written, BEFORE I FORMED THEE IN THE BELLY, I KNEW THEE (Jer. 1:5).

While when she passed idolatrous temples, Esau eagerly struggled to come out; hence it is written, THE WICKED ARE ESTRANGED FROM THE WOMB (Ps. 58:4).

AND SHE SAID: IF IT BE SO, WHEREFORE AM I THUS? R. Haggai said in R. Isaac's name: This teaches that our mother Rebekah went about to women's houses and asked them: 'Did you suffer so much in your time? If the pain of children is so great, would that I had not become pregnant.'

Yalkut Shimoni pages 514-516

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED TOGETHER WITHIN HER.

R. Yohanan said, This one ran to kill that one and that one ran to kill this one. R. Simeon b. Lakish, This one negated the commands of that one, and that one negated the commands of this one. R. Levi said that you should not say from when he came out from the womb of his mother that he was attacking him, rather while he was still in his mother's womb, his fist was directed against him. As it is written (Ps. 58:4) **THE WICKED ARE ESTRANGED FROM THE WOMB.** Another interpretation, **AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED.** When she passed in front of houses of idolatry, Esau struggled to come out, the wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray from the womb. When she would pass in front of houses of worship and of study, Jacob would struggle to get out. As it is written (Jer. 1:5) **BEFORE I FORMED THEE IN THE BELLY, I KNEW THEE.**

AND SHE SAID, IF IT BE SO...

It is taught that Rebekah, our mother, would go past the openings (of the houses) of the women, she would say: Did this much suffering come to you when your time had come? If this be the pain of children, then would that I had not become pregnant.

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED...

That they were apportioned for this world and the world to come. At that same moment, Samal wanted to slay Jacob in his mother's womb, but Michael stood up against him. At that same moment, Michael wanted to burn Samal, until the Holy One, Blessed be He,

placed courts between them.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 433-435

AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED...

R. Yohanan said, This one ran to slay that one, and that one ran to slay this one. Resh Lakish said: This one negated the commands of that one and that one negated the commands of this one. R. Berekia said when our mother Rebekah would pass in front of houses of idolatry, Esau would struggle to come out. Thus it is written (Ps. 58:4) THE WICKED ARE ESTRANGED FROM THE WOMB. When she would pass in front of houses of worship and of study, Jacob would struggle to come out. Thus it is written (Jer. 1:5) BEFORE I FORMED THEE IN THE BELLY, I KNEW THEE. R. Levi, in the name of R. Simeon, while both the righteous and wicked are in the wombs of their mothers, the Holy One, Blessed be He, makes known their actions. What does it mean, vayitrotz-tzu?¹ That they rose and fell like the waves of the ocean. This one says, I shall go out first. Esau said to Jacob: If you don't allow me to go out first, I will kill my mother, and I will get out by means of a Cesearean section. Jacob said, This wicked one is shedding blood from his (very) beginning. And he let him go out first.

AND SHE SAID, IF THIS BE SO....

R. Hanai said in the name of R. Isaac: This teaches that our mother Rebekah passed in front of the women's houses and said to them, Has this trouble come to you? If this be the affliction

of women, would that I had not become pregnant.

Another interpretation, Those who interpret the law metaphorically say, Rebekah spoke before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, If it is so that in the future Esau will kill, destroy completely the beloved of wisdom, that shall be in the future from amongst the children of Jacob, who will say before you (Ex. 16:2) ON THIS SEA IS MY GOD, and to whom shall you say on Mount Sinai, (Ex. 20:2) I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD? Immediately her insides constricted and she stood in prayer.

Bereshit Rabba 63:7

TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB (Gen. 25:23)

There are two nations in thy womb, each taking pride in his world and each in his kingdom. There are two rulers of nations in thy womb, Hadrian of the Gentiles and Solomon of Israel.

Another interpretation: Two (peoples) hated by the nations are in thy womb: all heathens hate Esau, and all heathens hate Israel. The hatred of thy Creator is in thy womb, as it is written, BUT ESAU I HATED (Mal. 1:3).

AND TWO PEOPLES SHALL BE SEPARATED FROM THY BOWELS

R. Berekiah said: This shows that he (Jacob) was born circumcised.

AND THE ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER PEOPLE

R. Helbo said in the name of the School of R. Shila: Hitherto

one might speak of Sabteca and Raamah, but from thee shall arise Jews and Arameans (Romans).

AND THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER

R. Huna commented: If he (Jacob) is deserving, he (Esau) shall serve him; if not, he (Esau) shall enslave him.

Yalkut Shimoni pages 516-517

TWO NATIONS IN HER WOMB

Two proud ones, Hadrian among the heathens, and Solomon in Israel. Hated by the heathens. All the nations hate Israel, all the nations hate Esau. Their hatred was as children in the womb. As it is written, (Mal. 1:3) AND ESAU I HATED. TWO NATIONS FROM YOUR WOMB. From here we know that he (Jacob) was born circumcised.

AND ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER...

Up to here they had been called Sabteca and Raamah. From here and onward, Jew and Aramean. AND THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER If he is worthy, he shall serve (him), if he is not worthy, he shall enslave him.

TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB

He said to her, you are like a field that has been sown and it succeeds, and filled the grain storehouses and the silos of wheat. He said, let the field be blessed that filled the grain storehouses and the silos of wheat. Thus, the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Rebekah, there shall be peace in the vineyard that shall in the future fill the Garden of Eden with the righteous ones

and Gehinom with the wicked ones.

TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB

R. Yehuda said, Rav said; Don't read goyim (nations), read gayim (proud ones). This is Antoninus.

AND ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER PEOPLE

R. Nachman said, From the beginning they brought libations from Judah, that their wine should not ferment until they had put leavening into it. And they call it just vinegar. Now, the wine of Edom doesn't ferment until they add leavening and they call it Edomite vinegar. This in order to fulfill that which is written, (Ez. 26:2) I SHALL BE FILLED WITH HER THAT IS LAID WASTE. If one is filled, this is destroyed. R. Nachman b. Isaac said from here, AND ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER PEOPLE. Caeserea and Jerusalem, if a man says to you, both have been destroyed or both are inhabited, do not believe him. Caeserea is destroyed and Jerusalem is inhabited, believe him. As it is written, (Ez. 26:2) I SHALL BE FILLED, and it is written (Gen. 25:23) ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER PEOPLE.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 436-437

TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB

He (God) said to her, My daughter, I am telling you things of mystery that no person knows of. Two nations are in your womb, how shall you hold onto them. The entire world cannot hold onto them, as it is written (Gen. 36:7) AND THE LAND OF THEIR

SOJOURNINGS COULD NOT BEAR THEM. Your womb, how shall it hold them? Another interpretation. TWO NATIONS ARE IN THY WOMB. Gayim is written (however). This one exalted his world, and that one exalted his world. Another interpretation. One exalted the Torah, as it is written (Ps. 47:5) HE CHOOSETH OUR INHERITANCE. And one exalts transgression, as it is written, (Lam. 9:13) THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS HATED. Another interpretation. And from one of them will come out he who shall build the temple for he is the pride of our strength, as it is written, (Ez. 24:21) BEHOLD I WILL PROFANE MY SANCTUARY. And who is this, Solomon. From one of them shall come out he who shall go up and destroy it. Who is this one, it is Vespasian, the wicked.

...SHALL BE SEPARATED FROM YOUR BOWELS. R. Berekia said, From here we know that Jacob was born circumcised. AND THE ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER... He (God) said to her, the two of them will not behave in the same manner. While Esau is raising up princes, Jacob is raising up prophets. Esau raises up princes, Jacob raises up kings. Another interpretation. In the same way that Esau tramples the world, as it is written, (Dan. 7:23) AND IT SHALL DEVOUR THE WHOLE EARTH, AND SHALL TREAD IT DOWN AND BREAK IT INTO PIECES. Thus shall Jacob trample the world, as it is written, (Is. 41:14-15) FEAR NOT, THOU WORM JACOB, and it is written, THOU SHALT THRESH THE MOUNTAINS AND MAKE THEM SMALL.

AND THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER (Gen. 25:23)

I don't know if the elder shall serve or the younger shall serve, but as long as it says, (Gen. 27:40) BY YOUR SWORD SHALL YOU LIVE AND YOUR BROTHER YOU SHALL SERVE, this teaches that the elder shall serve the younger. Another interpretation. AND THE ELDER... R. Huna said, if he merits, he will serve him, if not, he will enslave him.

Bereshit Rabba 63:8

AND WHEN HER DAYS TO BE DELIVERED WERE FULFILLED (Gen. 25:24)

In the case further on the period was abridged, whereas here it was complete. Below, te'omim is written fully (with a waw) for Perez and Zerah were both righteous, whereas here it is written defectively (without a waw), because of Jacob and Esau, one was righteous, while the other was wicked.

Yalkut Shimoni pages 517-518

BEHOLD THERE WERE TWINS IN HER WOMB

Here it is written in deficient script and further on in full script. Further on, (Gen. 38:27), te'omim, full. Because both of them, Perez and Zerah, were perfect. And here, Esau and Jacob, one was wicked and one was righteous.

Midrash Ha-Gadol page 439

BEHOLD, THERE WERE TWINS....

Te'omim is not written, rather tomim, for one was righteous, and one was wicked.

Bereshit Rabba 63:8

AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY (Gen. 25:25)

R. Haggai said in R. Isaac's name: As a reward for (obedience to My command), (Lev. 23:40) AND YE SHALL TAKE YOU ON THE FIRST DAY, I will reveal unto you the First, and avenge on the first, will rebuild the first, and bring you the first. I will reveal unto you the First; as it says, (Is. 44:6) I AM THE FIRST, AND I AM THE LAST; and avenge you on the first, viz. Esau, of whom it is written AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH; and will rebuild for you the first, viz. the Temple, of which it is written, (Jer. 17:12) THOU THRONE OF GLORY, ON HIGH FROM THE FIRST, THOU PLACE OF OUR SANCTUARY; and will bring you the first, viz. the royal Messiah, of whom it is written, (Is. 41:27) A HARBINGER UNTO ZION WILL I GIVE: BEHOLD BEHOLD THEM, AND UNTO JERUSALEM, etc. Another comment: Why did Esau issue first? So that he might issue and all the offensive matter with him. R. Abbahu said: Like the bath-attendant who first scours the bath and then washes the king's son; so also did Esau issue first so that he might come out together with the offensive matter. A matron asked R. Jose b. Halafta: Why did Esau issue first? Because the first drop was Jacob's, he answered her. For consider: if you place two diamonds in a tube, does not the one put in first come out last? So also the first drop was that which formed Jacob. RUDDY. R. Abba b. Kahana said: Altogether a shedder of blood. And when Samuel

saw that David was ruddy, as it is written, (ISam. 16:12) AND HE SENT, AND BROUGHT HIM IN. NOW HE WAS RUDDY, he was smitten with fear, thinking he too might be a murderer. But the Holy One, Blessed be He, reassured him that he was WITHAL OF BEAUTIFUL EYES (ib.) (which meant) Esau slew by his own impulse, whereas he (David) would slay only on the sentence of the court.

The emperor Diocletian was (originally) a swineherd near Tiberias. Whenever he came near a school, children would come out and beat him. Later he became emperor and went and stayed at Paneas, and sent letters to Tiberias just before the eve of the Sabbath, with the order: "I command the Rabbis of the Jews to appear before me on Sunday morning." He further instructed the messenger not to give them the message until just before Friday evening. When R. Samuel b. Nachman went down to bathe, he saw Rabbi standing before his academy with his face all pale. On enquiring why he was so pale, he told him of the letters sent him by the emperor. "Go and bathe," he told him, "for God will perform a miracle for you." So he went in to bathe, and there a bath sprite came jesting and dancing toward them. Rabbi wished to scold him, but R. Samuel b. Nachman said to him: "Leave him alone, for sometimes his coming heralds a miracle. "Your master is in distress, yet you frolic," he rebuked him. "Go home, eat and keep the Sabbath with good cheer for your creator will perform a miracle for you, and I will set you Sunday morning where you desire." At the termination of the Sabbath,

after the Service, he (the sprite) took them and set them before the gates of Paneas. He (the Emperor) was informed: Lo, they are standing before the gates. Then let the gates be closed, he ordered. Thereupon he, (the demon) took them and set them on the rampart of the town. On being apprised of this, he (Diocletian) exclaimed: "I command that the baths be heated for three days, then let them go and bathe therein and then appear before me." The baths were accordingly heated for three days, but the sprite went and tempered the heat for them, after which they entered, bathed, and appeared before him. "Because you know that your God performs miracles on your behalf you insult the emperor," he upbraided them. "Diocletian the swineherd we did indeed insult, but to Diocletian the emperor we are loyal subjects," they answered. "Even so," he replied, "you must not insult the humblest Roman or the meanest soldier."

ALL OVER LIKE A HAIRY MANTLE

R. Hanina b. Isaac said: Everyone (of his descendents) is eligible for a mantle (toga). The Rabbis of the South in R. Alexandri's name, and Rahabah in the name of R. Abba b. Kahana, said: He came out destined to be altogether scattered like the chaff in the threshing-room floor, as it is written, (Dan. 2:35) THEN WAS THE IRON.... BROKEN IN PIECES TOGETHER, AND BECAME LIKE THE CHAFF OF THE SUMMER THRESHING-FLOORS. R. Hanina b. Isaac said: Why will they become like the chaff of the summer threshing

floors? Because they attacked the noble ones.

AND THEY CALLED HIS NAME ESAU

It is for nought that I created him in My universe. R. Isaac said: (God declared) Ye have given a name to your swine (Esau); then I too will name My firstborn, as it says, (Ex. 4:22)

THUS SAITH THE LORD: ISRAEL IS MY SON, MY FIRSTBORN.

Yalkut Shimoni pages 518-521

AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY

By the merit of the first one, I am revealed to you first, and tear you away from the first, and build for you first and bring to you first. By the merit (Lev. 23:40) AND YOU SHALL TAKE FOR YOU ON THE FIRST DAY. I was revealed to you first, (Is. 44:6) I AM THE FIRST AND I AM THE LAST. And tear you from the first, AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY. And build for you first, this is the temple. As it is written, (Jer. 17:12) THE THRONE OF GLORY ON HIGH FROM THE BEGINNING. And I will bring to you first, this is the anointed king, as it is written, (Is. 41:27) THE FIRST TO ZION BEHOLD, BEHOLD THEM. Another interpretation: Why did Esau come out first? In order that he should come out filled with blood and his offensive matter should come out with him. This is like the bathing master who cleans the bathtub, and afterwards washes the son of the king. Thusly, why did he (Esau) come out first? In order that he should come out and all his offensive matter with him. A woman asked R. Yosi b. Halafta, Why did Esau come out first? He said to her,

the first drop was Jacob. For example, if I put two pearls in a tube, the first one that you put in, it will come out last. Thusly, the first drop was Jacob.

RUDDY...

As if he were spilling blood. Because Samuel saw that David was ruddy, it is written, (ISam. 16:12) AND HE SENT, AND BROUGHT HIM IN AND HE WAS RUDDY. Immediately, he was afraid, he said, Even this one will shed blood like Esau. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him (ibid) WITH BEAUTIFUL EYES. Esau, from his own will, kills. This one (David) by the will of the Sanhedrin, he kills. The Emperor Diocletian....

(The remainder of the story is the same as cited above in the material from Bereshit Rabba 63:8.)

ALL OVER LIKE A HAIRY MANTLE

Each one is worthy of a mantle. All was scattered like the chaff on the threshing floor. (Dan. 2:35) THEN WAS THE IRON... BROKEN IN PIECES TOGETHER, AND BECOME LIKE THE CHAFF OF THE SUMMER THRESHING FLOOR. Why will they become like the chaff of the summer threshing floor? Because they attacked the great ones.

AND THEY CALLED HIS NAME ESAU

It is for naught that I created him in my universe. R. Isaac said; You have given a name to your swine (Esau); then I too will name my firstborn. (Ex. 4:22) THUS SAITH THE LORD, MY FIRST BORN SON IS ISRAEL.

AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY

While he was still in his mother's womb, he drank her menstrual blood and came out reddish. Thusly he is called Edom.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 439-440

THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY

R. Aba said, a spiller of blood. Another interpretation: Ruddy, that he came out, him and his offensive matter with him. Another interpretation: Ruddy, that he is filled with blood, and that he hated the blood of circumcision, and that he hated the blood while it remained in the body of a man, as it is written (Ez. 35:6)

SURELY THOU HAST HATED THINE OWN BLOOD, THEREFORE BLOOD... A certain woman asked R. Yosi b. Halafta, she said: Don't you say that Jacob is the beloved one? Why then did Esau come out first? He said to her: The first drop was Jacob, but Esau came out from the remainder of the blood, thus it is written, RUDDY.

R. Abahu said, It is like the bathing master who first cleans the bathtub and afterwards bathes the king's son. Thus, why did Esau come out first? In order that he and all his offensive matter with him should come out, and afterwards, Jacob came out. Another interpretation: RUDDY. R. Yehuda said; if you have seen a man that his face is red or a completely wicked person such as Esau, or a completely righteous person such as David. In the case of Esau, what is written, AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY. For David, what is written, (ISam. 16:12) AND HE WAS RUDDY, YET WITH BEAUTIFUL EYES.

ALL OVER LIKE A HAIRY MANTLE

That he stretched his hand against the great ones of the gate.²

Another interpretation: That in the future he will destroy synagogues and houses of study, that in them they glorify the name of God. Another interpretation: That all who make mention of his (Esau) name, their hair stands up from fear.

AND THEY CALLED HIS NAME ESAU

He is for naught in his world. Another interpretation: Esau is written with a shin, in the same way that this moth dominates the garment, and consumes it.³ Thusly is Esau, the wicked, to Israel.

Bereshit Rabba 63:9

AND AFTER THAT CAME FORTH HIS BROTHER (Gen. 25:26)

A prefect asked a member of the family of Sallu: Who will enjoy power after us? (In reply) he brought a blank piece of paper, took a quill and wrote upon it, AND AFTER THAT CAME FORTH HIS BROTHER, AND HIS HAND HAD HOLD ON ESAU'S HEEL. Upon this the comment was made: See how ancient words become new in the mouth of a Sage. Moreover, it teaches how much suffering was endured by that righteous man.

Yalkut Shimoni page 521

AND AFTER THAT CAME FORTH HIS BROTHER

A certain prefect asked R. Gamliel: Who will hold onto the kingdom after us? He took a piece of paper, he took a pen and

wrote on the paper, AND AFTER THAT CAME FORTH HIS BROTHER, AND HIS HAND HAD HOLD ON ESAU'S HEEL. They said: See the ancient words become new in the mouth of the Sage. This was to inform you how much trouble that righteous man had to suffer. From here, you learn that the descendents of Esau do not fall until a remnant of Jacob shall come and break the legs of the descendents of Esau on Mount Seir. As it is written, (Num. 24:19) AND OUT OF JACOB SHALL ONE HAVE DOMINION AND SHALL DESTROY THE REMNANT FROM THE CITY.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 440-441

AND AFTER THAT CAME FORTH HIS BROTHER...

What does it mean, HAD TAKEN HOLD OF ESAU'S HEEL? That he holds onto his heel in an effort to cause him to fall. Another interpretation: AND HIS HAND; There is no other kingdom in the world after the kingdom of Esau, except for that of Israel. Therefore it is said, on the heel, close to it. Thus is it written, (Jo. 3:1) AND IT WILL BE THAT I WILL POUR MY SPIRIT OUT ON ALL FLESH. After the kingdom of Esau; and about them it is written, (Lev. 11:7) AND THE SWINE... That it returns to the kingdom of its master. Like in the matter where it is written, (Ob. 1:21) AND THE REDEEMERS SHALL GO UP TO MOUNT ZION, TO RULE OVER MOUNT ESAU AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD'S.

Bereshit Rabba 63:10

AND THE BOYS GREW (Gen. 25:27)

R. Phineas said in R. Levi's name: They were like a myrtle and a wild rose-bush growing side by side; when they attained to maturity, one yielded its fragrance and the other its thorns. So for thirteen years both went to school and came home from school. After this age, one went to the house of study and the other to idolatrous shrines. R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon said: A man is responsible for his son until the age of thirteen, thereafter he must say, Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this boy.

AND ESAU WAS A CUNNING HUNTER

He ensnared people by their words.⁴ You did not steal? Tell me who was your accomplice. You did not murder? Who was your accessory? R. Abbahu said: He was a trapper and a fieldsman, trapping (i.e. deceiving) at home and trapping in the field. Trapping at home (by asking) How do you tithe salt? in the field (by asking) How do you tithe straw? R. Hiyya b. Abba said: He made himself free to all like a field. Israel cried out before God: Sovereign of the Universe! Is it not enough that we have been subject to the seventy nations, but must be subject to this one too, who is immorally abused like women? The Holy One, Blessed be He, answered them: Therefore will I too punish him with those very words, as it says, (Jer. 49:22) AND THE HEART OF THE MIGHTY MEN OF EDOM AT THAT DAY SHALL BE

AS THE HEART OF A WOMAN IN HER PANGS.

AND JACOB WAS A QUIET MAN, DWELLING IN TENTS

In two tents, viz. in the academy of Shem and the academy of Eber.

Yalkut Shimoni 521-523.

AND THE BOYS GREW UP

They were like the myrtle and the wild rose-bush, one on top of the other. And when they had grown, this one gave off his fragrance, and this one his thorns. Thusly all thirteen years that the two of them went to school, after thirteen years of school this one went to school, and that one went to houses of idol worship. R. Eleazar b. Simeon said, A man has to take care of his child until the age of thirteen. After thirteen years of age he should say, Blessed is He who is the one who has freed me from the responsibility of this one.

AND ESAU WAS A CUNNING HUNTER

He ensnared creatures by his words.⁵ You did not steal? Who stole with you? You did not slay? Who slew with you? R. Abbahu said: A trapper and a fieldsman. He trapped at home, he trapped in the field. Trapped at home; How does one tithe salt? Trapped in the fields; How does one tithe straw? R. Abba b. Kahana said: He made himself free like a field. Israel said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, Master of the Universe, isn't it enough that we have been subject to the seventy nations,

but must we be subject to this one who is degraded like women? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, By those words I will punish him. As it is said, (Jer. 49:22) AND THE HEART OF THE MIGHTY MEN OF EDOM...

AND JACOB WAS A QUIET MAN

There were two tents; the house of study of Shem and the house of study of Eber.

AND THE BOYS GREW UP

Jacob went on the path of life. That he sat in tents and occupied himself with the study of Torah, all his days. Esau went on the path of death. That he killed Nimrod, and Chiver, his son. Further, he wanted to kill Jacob. (Gen. 27:41) LET THE DAYS OF MOURNING FOR MY FATHER DRAW CLOSE. Jacob served Abraham, our father, for fifteen years, and Shem, fifty-eight years. Shem served Methuselah for ninety-eight years, as it is written about Methuselah.

JACOB WAS A QUIET MAN

He was born circumcised.

Midrash Ha-Gadol page 431

AND THE BOYS GREW

They grew like this bush.

AND ESAU BECAME A MAN

All thirteen years the two of them went to school, when they grew up, this one was a spice and that one was a thorn. R. Eleazar in the name of R. Simeon said: All thirteen years a man must

take care of his child. From there on he must say, Praised be He who has freed me from the responsibility of this one.
AND ESAU WAS A CUNNING HUNTER.

Two great hunters did our mother, Rebekah, raise up. Esau, who hunted creatures and kept them from under the wings of the Shechina. Jacob hunted creatures and brought them close under the wings of the Shechina, and returned to the tents. As it is written, DWELLING IN TENTS, that is, he returned to tents. A tent is not written, rather tents. He made use of many houses of study. The house of study of Shem and the house of study of Eber, and the house of study of Abraham.

Bereshit Rabba 63:10

NOW ISAAC LOVED ESAU, BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON (Gen. 25:28)

Choice meat and choice wine were reserved for his (Isaac's) mouth.
AND REBEKAH LOVED JACOB

The more she heard his voice (engaged in study) the stronger grew her love for him.

Yalkut Shimoni page 523

NOW ISAAC LOVED ESAU, BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON

Choice meat and choice wine for his mouth.

REBEKAH LOVED JACOB

Each time she heard his voice, love was added onto love.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 441-442

NOW ISAAC LOVED ESAU...

For our father, Isaac, knew not of the deeds of Esau, that they were indecent. Scripture states, (Ps. 139:21) SHALL THE HATEFUL OF GOD, I NOT HATE? Why did he love him? Rather, he loved him in his appearance, in order to bring him closer and pull him along. For behold, how much the more so if he loved him and his deeds were accursed, if he had hated him and kept him far away. Our rabbis have written, the right shall draw close and the left shall push away. Therefore it is written, NOW ISAAC LOVED ESAU.

BECAUSE HE ATE OF HIS VENISON

Another interpretation: BECAUSE HE ATE... God forbid, that our father should have loved Esau because of food. Rather he foresaw, by the Holy Spirit, that in the future, Obadiah would come forth from him. That he hid from amongst the prophets of God, one hundred people. Fifty and fifty people in a cave. He provided them with bread and water. And thus it is written, HE ATE HIS VENISON. What does venison signify in Gematria? One hundred and four. That he sustained one hundred people and gave four loaves of bread to each one. And Obadiah was from amongst their children's children. It is written, (II Sam. 6:12) THE HOUSE OF OBED-EDOM. Thusly, Obadiah is from Edom, because of this; all of his prophecy is only concerning Edom. As it is written, (Ob. 1:1) THE VISION OF OBADIAH. THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD

CONCERNING EDOM. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, Obadiah will go from living between two wicked people, Achav and Isabel. He did not learn from their deeds and he prophesied retribution on Esau the wicked, who lived between two righteous people, Isaac and Rebekah. He did not learn from their deeds. And thus it is written, (Ob. 1:18) AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB SHALL BE A FIRE AND THE HOUSE OF JOSEPH A FLAME, AND THE HOUSE OF ESAU FOR STUBBLE.

Bereshit Rabba 63:11-12

AND JACOB SOD POTTAGE (Gen. 25:29)

What is the purpose of this pottage? He (Esau) asked him. I made it because that old man (Abraham) has died, he replied. Judgment has overtaken that righteous man, he exclaimed, then there is neither reward nor resurrection. But lo, the holy spirit cries out, (Jer. 22:10) WEEP YE NOT FOR THE DEAD, NEITHER BEMOAN HIM. WEEP YE NOT FOR THE DEAD, this applies to Abraham, BUT WEEP SORE FOR HIM THAT GOETH, to Esau.

AND ESAU CAME IN FROM THE FIELD

R. Phineas said in R. Levi's name, and the Rabbis in R. Simon's name: You find that Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Isaac, one hundred and eighty. God withheld these five years from Abraham's life because Esau outraged a betrothed maiden and committed murder. Thus it says, AND ESAU CAME IN FROM THE FIELD, which means that he violated a betrothed maiden, as it says, (Deut. 22:25) BUT IF THE MAN FIND THE DAMSEL THAT

IS BETROTHED IN THE FIELD, AND THE MAN TAKE HOLD OF HER, AND LIE WITH HER; while AND HE WAS FAINT signifies that he committed murder, as in the verse, (Jer. 4:31) FOR MY SOUL FAINTETH BEFORE THE MURDERERS. R. Berekiah and R. Zakkai the elder said: He also committed theft, as you read, (Ob. 1:5) IF THIEVES CAME TO THEE, IF ROBBERS BY NIGHT. Said the Holy One, Blessed be He: I made a promise to Abraham, assuring him (Gen. 15:15) BUT THOU SHALT GO TO THY FATHERS IN PEACE; THOU SHALT BE BURIED IN A GOOD OLD AGE: is this a good old age when he sees his grandson practising idolatry, immorality and murder! Better that he quit this world in peace! Hence it is written, (Ps. 43:4) FOR THY LOVING-KINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE.

Yalkut Shimoni pages 523-525

AND JACOB SOD POTTAGE

Esau said to him, What is the purpose of this dish? He said to him: Because that old man has died.⁶ He said to him: Judgment has come to him, that old man, there is neither the giving of rewards nor resurrection. The Holy Spirit said to him: (Jer. 22:10) WEEP NOT FOR THE DEAD, this was Abraham. WEEP FOR HE THAT GOES, this is Esau.

AND JACOB SOD POTTAGE

It is taught that on the same day that Abraham, our father, died, Jacob, our father, prepared a dish of lentils in order to comfort Isaac, our father. What is the significance of lentils?

Just as the lentils are round, so mourning comes round. There are those who say, just as the lentil has no mouth, so the mourner has no mouth. It (the lentils) is amongst them in order to comfort those who come (to visit). R. Yohanan said: Five transgressions did this wicked one commit on that same day. He had intercourse with an engaged girl, as it is written, ESAU CAME IN FROM THE FIELD. As it is written there, (Deut. 22:27) FOR HE FOUND HER IN THE FIELD. He committed murder. It is written here, HE WAS FAINT, and it is written there, (Jer. 4:31) MY SOUL FAINTETH BEFORE THE MURDERERS. He despaired for the resurrection of the dead. It is written here, BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE. He despaired of the belief in God, it is written here, WHAT IS THIS TO ME, and it is written there, (Ex. 15:2) THIS IS MY GOD, AND I WILL GLORIFY HIM. He scorned the birthright, as it is written here, AND ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT. You find that Abraham lived one hundred and seventy-five years, and Isaac lived one hundred and eighty years. The five years that the Holy One, Blessed be He, withheld from his life were on account of the five sins which he (Esau) committed. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I have promised to Abraham and to you, that you shall go to your fathers in peace, (Gen. 15:15) BUT THOU SHALT GO TO THY FATHERS IN PEACE; THOU SHALT BE BURIED IN A GOOD OLD AGE. This is a good old age, seeing your grandson committing idolatry, adultery and murder? Better for him that he should leave in peace. As it is written, (Ps. 63:4) FOR YOUR LOVING-KINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 442-444

AND JACOB SOD POTTAGE

Scripture has come to teach you the humility of Jacob, our father. Come and see how many men-servants and maid-servants belonged to his father. When he came back from the house of study, he sent them out, that they might sleep. He did not wish to excite or grieve a single one of them, who served him. Rather, he stood and cooked himself.

AND ESAU CAME IN FROM THE FIELD

R. Ishmael said, on that same day, he did not catch any game and while he was still in the field, he smelled the odor of lentils. He came and said to Jacob: Give me some of that red stuff to eat. He (Jacob) said to him: Red you came forth from your mother's womb and red food you have loved, thusly shall your name be called Edom. Another interpretation: AND JACOB SOD POTTAGE. Esau came in from the field and he was weary. It is taught that on the day Abraham, our father, departed from the world, Jacob made a dish from lentils to console Isaac, our father. Why was it of lentils? Rabba b. Mari said: He said it as they say it in the West; Just as the lentil is round, so too does mourning come around. There are those who say, just as the lentil has no mouth, so the mourner has no mouth. What difference does it make? It relates to whether one gives comfort with eggs.

AND ESAU CAME IN FROM THE FIELD, AND HE WAS FAINT

R. Yohanan said: This same one committed five sins on that same

day. He had intercourse with a betrothed maiden, he murdered, he despaired of the resurrection of the dead, and he despaired of the existence of God, and he rejected the birthright. He had intercourse with a betrothed maiden, where do we know this from? It is written here, ESAU CAME IN FROM THE FIELD. It is written there, (Deut. 22:27) FOR HE FOUND HER IN THE FIELD. He committed murder, from where? It is written here, AND HE WAS FAINT. It is written there, (Jer. 4:31) FOR MY SOUL FAINTS BEFORE THE MURDERERS. He despaired of the resurrection of the dead. It is written, BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE. That he despaired of the belief in God. It is written, WHAT IS THIS BIRTHRIGHT TO ME? And it is written there, (Ex. 15:2) THIS IS MY GOD, AND I WILL GLORIFY HIM. He rejected the birthright, as it is written, SE ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT. The Lord said, I have promised Abraham and I said to him, you shall be buried in peace. Is this a good old age when he sees his grandson committing sins and spilling blood? This is a good old age? It is better for a righteous man to die in peace. As it is written, (Ps. 43:4) FOR THY LOVING-KINDNESS IS BETTER THAN LIFE.

Bereshit Rabba 63:12

AND ESAU SAID TO JACOB: LET ME SWALLOW... (Gen. 25:30)

R. Isaac b. R. Ze'ira said: That wicked man opened his mouth wide like a camel's and declared: I open my mouth, and do you go on pouring in, as when we learned: You must not stuff a camel

nor force food into its mouth.

SOME OF THIS RED, RED POTTAGE

R. Johanan and Resh Lakish explained this. R. Jchanan said:

He demanded both his and his Patron's. Resh Lakish said: He demanded both his and that of those like him. He was red, his food was red, his land red, his warriors were red, their garments were red, his avenger will be red, clad in red. He was red:

(Gen. 25:25) AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY. His food was red:

LET ME SWALLOW I PRAY THEE, SOME OF THIS RED, RED POTTAGE. His

country is red: (Gen. 32:4) TO ESAU HIS BROTHER UNTO THE LAND

OF SEIR, THE FIELD OF RED. His warriors are red: (Nah. 2:4)

THE SHIELD OF HIS MIGHTY MEN IS MADE RED. Their garments are red:

(Ibid) THE VALIANT MEN ARE IN SCARLET. His Avenger will be red:

(Is. 63:2) WHEREFORE IS THINE APPAREL RED?

Yalkut Shimoni page 525

SOME OF THIS RED, RED POTTAGE

R. Yohanan said: That of both him and his patron. Resh Lakish

said: That of both his and of those like him. He was red:

(Gen. 25:25) AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY. His food was red:

SOME OF THAT RED, RED POTTAGE. His warriors were red: (Nah. 2:4)

THE SHIELD OF HIS MIGHTY MEN IS MADE RED. His clothes were red:

(Ibid) THE VALIANT MEN ARE IN SCARLET. He who separates from him

is red: (S. S. 5:10) MY BELOVED IS WHITE AND RUDDY. Clad in

red: (Is. 63:2) WHEREFORE ARE YOUR GARMENTS RED?

Midrash Ha-Gadol page 444

LET ME SWALLOW, I PRAY THEE...

Concerning him, scripture says, (Pr. 13:25) THE BELLY OF THE WICKED SHALL BE WANTING. R. Isaac b. Zair said: This same wicked man opened his mouth like a camel and said: I open my mouth and you are dismissed and should be gone. In the same way it is written, LET ME SWALLOW... We have learned that one does not stuff a camel nor force food upon it. But one may put some food in its mouth. Woe to those wicked ones to whom the world does not fill their belly. Thus it is written, (Ps. 5:10) THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE. From this; RED, RED, there are two types of red: red wine and red lentils.

Bereshit Rabba 63:13

AND JACOB SAID, SELL ME TO-DAY (Gen. 25:31)

Sell me one day of yours, he demanded. R. Aha commented: Whoever is able to calculate (the period of dispersion) will find that but one day did Jacob dwell (in peace) under the shadow of Esau.

Yalkut Shimoni pages 525-526.

SELL ME TO-DAY...

They said that while Jacob and Esau were in the womb of their mother, Jacob said to Esau: My brother, two worlds are before us. This world has in it food, drink, and business, taking a wife and giving birth to children. However, in the world to come, there are none of these attributes. Your desire draws you to this world, and I am drawn to the world to come. As it

is written: SELL ME TO-DAY YOUR BIRTHRIGHT, like that day we were in our mother's womb. Immediately, Esau despaired of the resurrection of the dead, as it is written, BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE. At the same time, Esau took his portion, this world. Jacob took his portion, the world to come. When Jacob came from the house of Laban, Esau saw his children, his man-servants and maid-servants. He said to him: Jacob, my brother, it was not in this manner that you said you would take the world to come, and I would take this world. Of what use are these riches, that you will use like me? Jacob said, (Gen. 33:5) THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN YOUR SERVANT. At that moment, Esau contemplated to himself: Just as in this world, the Lord has given him (even) that which is not his portion, in the world to come, how much more so. Immediately, Esau said: I have come around to your way of thinking, so let us share. You take half of this world and half of the world to come. Jacob said to him: My children are tender, they cannot stand up under troubles, as it is written, (Ibid:13) AND IF YOU OVERRIDE THEM ONE DAY AND JACOB SAID: SELL ME TO-DAY... He said to him: Sell me one day of yours. R. Aha said: Any-one who is able to calculate the number of years that our father, Jacob, sat in peace in the shadow of Esau, will find it is one day.

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 444-445

AND JACOB SAID: SELL ME TO-DAY YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

Those lacking in faith say: It is customary for a man when he gives his neighbor a dish of lentils, he says to him: Sell me your birthright? Then he sells it to him? These are the things that transpired there. When Esau came in, he found Jacob and he was standing and cooking, and Esau's eyes were affected by the smoke. He said to him: All of this hard work, what is it to you? Raise your eyes and see how all who come in the world eat all that is found within. Fish, unclean animals, swine's flesh and everything like that. And you complain that you have to cook a dish of lentils? Jacob said to him: And if we do thusly, what shall we do on that same day, that it is written, (Zep. 2:3) SEEK RIGHTEOUSNESS, SEEK HUMILITY, THAT PERHAPS YOU SHALL BE HIDDEN ON THE DAY OF THE LORD'S WRATH. The day that brings the reward of the righteous, and there shall be the herald announcing and saying: (Is. 33:18) WHERE IS HE THAT WEIGHS AND HE THAT COUNTS. He said to him: For there is a world to come or perhaps there is resurrection of the dead? From now, the first man who died, perhaps he returns and comes back? Noah, who by his hand the world was built, perhaps he returns and comes to Him? Abraham, who died, and the more beloved to him than all the rest, perhaps he will return and come to Him? Jacob said to him: And if there is no world to come, and no resurrection of the dead, this birthright, what is

it to you? Sell me this day, your birthright. What is the meaning of chayom? That day the birthright was sold, but after the giving of the Torah, a birthright could not be sold. As it is written, (Deut. 21:17) HE SHALL ACKNOWLEDGE THE FIRST-BORN, THE SON OF THE HATED. Another interpretation: Chayom, He said to him: You should know that there is a world to come and that there is a giving of a reward. That you should not say that I beguiled you.

Bereshit Rabba 63:13

AND ESAU SAID: BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE (Gen. 25:32) Resh Lakish said: He began to revile and blaspheme: it is not written, what is (the birthright) to me, but, WHAT IS THIS TO ME, zeh li? (this teaches that he denied Him of whom it is written, (Ex. 15:2) THIS IS MY GOD.) Another interpretation is that Nimrod was seeking to slay him on account of the garment which had belonged to Adam (and which Esau now possessed), for whenever he put it on and went out into the field, all the beasts and the birds in the world would come and flock around him.

Yalkut Shimoni pages 526-527

AND ESAU SAID: BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE He began to blaspheme. Why me (lama li) is not written, rather, what is this to me (lama zeh li). Another interpretation: Nimrod wanted to slay him because of the garment that belonged to

Adam. For whenever Esau wore it and went out to the field, all the birds and beasts in the world flocked to him.

Midrash Ha-Gadol page 445

AND ESAU SAID: BEHOLD....

R. Samuel said: Esau said out loud: What is this birthright to me? And the Holy Spirit cried out and said: And what is this birthright to you?

Bereshit Rabba 63:13

AND JACOB SAID: SWEAR TO ME (Gen. 25:33)

Why did Jacob display such eagerness for the birthright? Because we learned: Before the Tabernacle was erected the high places were permitted, and the sacrificial service was performed by the firstborn; after it was erected the high places were forbidden and the sacrificial service was performed by the priests. Said (Jacob): Shall this wicked man stand and offer the sacrifices! Therefore he strove so ardently to obtain the birthright. Thus it is written, (Ezek. 35:6) I WILL PREPARE THEE UNTO BLOOD, AND BLOOD SHALL PURSUE THEE; SURELY THOU HAST HATED BLOOD, THEREFORE SHALL BLOOD PURSUE THEE: did then Esau hate blood! R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama b. R. Hanina: It refers to the blood of circumcision. R. Levi said in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman: It means the blood of sacrifices (sprinkled by) the firstborn. The Rabbis interpreted: Thou hast hated the blood of man while it is in

the body; and thus it is written, (Ps. 109:17) YEA, HE LOVED CURSING, AND IT CAME UNTO HIM, AND HE DELIGHTED NOT IN BLESSING. R. Levi said in R. Hanina's name: HE DELIGHTED NOT IN THE BIRTHRIGHT. R. Huna said: It refers to the blood of sacrifices, which is called a blessing, as in the verse, (Ex. 20:21) AN ALTAR OF EARTH THOU SHALT MAKE UNTO ME.... I WILL COME UNTO THEE AND BLESS THEE.

Yalkut Shimon page 527

AND JACOB SAID: SWEAR TO ME...

Why was Jacob so eager to give his very soul for the birthright? For we are taught that until the temple was built, the high places were permitted, and the firstborn served in them. After the Temple was built, the high places were forbidden and the sacrificial service was performed by the priests. Jacob said: Shall this wicked one stand and perform sacrifices! For it is written, (Ezek. 35:6) SURELY THOU HAST HATED BLOOD, THEREFORE SHALL BLOOD PURSUE THEE. And has Esau hated blood? R. Levi said: This is the blood of circumcision. R. Samuel b. Nahmani said: This is the blood of sacrifice. The rabbis said: You hated the blood of man, and (yet) you shed it. As it is written, (Ps. 109:17) YEA, HE LOVED CURSING... R. Levi said: He had no desire for the birthright. R. Hama said: This refers to the blood of sacrifice, that is called a blessing. As it is written, (Ex. 20:21) AN ALTAR OF EARTH THOU SHALT MAKE UNTO ME... I WILL COME UNTO THEE AND BLESS THEE.

Midrash Ha-Gadol page 445

AND JACOB SAID: SWEAR TO ME...

He said to him: Know that after the giving of the Torah there will be no selling of a birthright, and an oath will have no worth except at this time only. Thusly, he said chayom. AND HE SOLD HIS BIRTHRIGHT UNTO JACOB. It is close (to the words) AND JACOB. This is to teach that two purchases were taken from him; the birthright and the blessing. Thus it is said, (Gen. 27:37) AND HE SUPPLANTED ME TWO TIMES.

Bereshit Rabba 63:14

AND JACOB GAVE ESAU BREAD AND PORTAGE OF LENTILS (Gen. 25:34) As a lentil is wheel-shaped, so is the world like a wheel. As a lentil has no mouth (opening) so a mourner has no mouth, for a mourner does not speak. As a lentil symbolizes mourning, yet also joy so here too there was mourning -- because of Abraham's death, and joy -- because Jacob received the birthright. AND HE DID EAT AND DRINK

He brought in with him a company of ruffians, who said: We will eat his dishes and mock at him; while the Holy Spirit exclaimed, (Is. 21:5) THEY PREPARE THE TABLE -- i.e. they set the festive board; (Ibid) THEY LIGHT THE LAMPS -- they arrange the lamp. R. Abba b. Kahana observed: In some places a lamp is called tzefta (Ibid) RISE UP YE PRINCES -- this means Michael and Gabriel; (Ibid) ANOINT THE SHIELD -- makes a record that the birthright belongs to Jacob. Bar Kappara taught: And this was

because they made sport of him. And how do we know that the Holy One, Blessed be He, agreed with them? Because it says, (Ex. 4:22) THUS SAITH THE LORD: ISRAEL IS MY SON, MY FIRSTBORN.

AND ROSE UP AND WENT

R. Levi said: His world went out with him.

SO ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT

What did he despise with it? Said R. Levi: He despised (i.e. rejected belief in) resurrection. Thus it is written, (Pr. 18:3) WHEN THE WICKED COMETH, THERE COMETH ALSO DISGRACE, AND WITH IGNOMINY REPROACH. WHEN THE WICKED COMETH alludes to Esau, as it says, (Mal. 1:4) AND THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE BORDER OF WICKEDNESS. THERE COMETH ALSO DISGRACE: for his disgrace came with him. AND WITH IGNOMINY REPROACH: The ignominy of famine accompanied him, for REPROACH refers to famine, as in the verse, (this is actually a combination of Joel 2:19 and Ezek. 36:30) AND I WILL NO MORE MAKE YOU A REPROACH OF FAMINE AMONG THE NATIONS. Hence it is written, (Gen. 26:1) AND THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND.

Yalkut Shimon pages 527-528

BREAD AND POTTAGE OF LENTILS

Just as the lentil has both joy and mourning, thus is the mourning -- that Abraham died, and thus is the joy -- that Jacob took the birthright.

HE DID EAT AND DRINK

He brought in with him a band of ruffians. They said: We will eat his dishes and mock at him. The Holy Spirit said: (Is. 21:5) THEY PREPARE THE TABLE, THEY SET THE FESTIVE BOARD, THEY LIGHT THE LAMPS. They arrange the lamp, in some places they call a lamp tzefita. (Ibid) RISE UP, YE PRINCES. This is Michael and Gabriel. (Ibid) ANOINT THE SHIELD. Write down that the birth-right belongs to Jacob. Bar Kappara taught: This was because they made sport of him. How do we know that the Lord agreed with them? For it is written, (Ex. 4:22) THUS SAITH THE LORD: ISRAEL IS MY SON, MY FIRST BORN.

AND ROSE UP, AND WENT HIS WAY

He went out and his ignominy with him.

SO ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT

What did he despise it with? He despised resurrection of the dead. As it is written, (Pr. 18:3) WHEN THE WICKED COMETH... He came and his ignominy with him. (Ibid) AND WITH IGNOMINY REPROACH. He was accompanied by the reproach of a famine. There is no ignominy other than famine. As it is written, (Joel 2:19, Ex. 36:30) I WILL NO MORE MAKE YOU A REPROACH OF FAMINE AMONG THE NATIONS. AND THERE WAS A FAMINE IN THE LAND (Gen. 26:1).

Midrash Ha-Gadol pages 445-446

AND HE DID EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP, AND WENT HIS WAY. SO ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT

What did he do? He began to bring together groups of people

against Jacob and say to them: Do you know what I did to this one? I ate his lentils, I drank his wine and I made jest of him and I sold him my birthright. Jacob said to him: Drink and enjoy yourself. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: You have mocked the birthright. Your life which I gave you shall be mocked for generations. As it is written, (Ob. 1:2) BEHOLD, I HAVE MADE YOU SMALL AMONG THE NATIONS, YOU ARE GREATLY MOCKED. In that he despaired of the belief in God, and in the resurrection of the dead, his descendants are cut off from the world. And about him, David said, (Ps. 53:2) THE FOOL SAID IN HIS HEART: THERE IS NO GOD. What is written near to that? (Ps. 53:6) THERE ARE THEY IN GREAT FEAR, WHERE NO FEAR WAS; FOR GOD HATH SCATTERED THE BONES OF HIM THAT ENCAMPETH AGAINST THEE; THOU HAST PUT THEM TO SHAME, BECAUSE GOD HATH REJECTED THEM. Near to that, (Ps. 53:7) OH THAT THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL WERE COME OUT OF ZION! WHEN GOD TURNETH THE CAPTIVITY OF HIS PEOPLE, LET JACOB REJOICE, LET ISRAEL BE GLAD.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. The play is on the root ratz, meaning to run, or ratzatz, meaning to press or squeeze.
2. The great ones of the gate is clearly a euphemism for the synagogue.
3. The Hebrew word for moth is ahsh (ayin, shin), a play on the spelling of Esau (ayin, sin, vav).
4. This is a play on the phrase, tzayid b'feev, which occurs in Gen. 25:28, the next verse. The rabbis interpret the phrase to mean that Esau made use of his mouth, i.e. his words, to ensnare people (tzayid here meaning to ensnare).
5. Ibid.
6. Lentils were the traditional dish of the meal of consolation for mourners.

CHAPTER SIX

Charts

In order to make easy visual comparison of the placement of the midrashim in their collection, this chart has been designed. The various midrashim are listed by theme with three columns at the end. One column is for Bereshit Rabba (1), one column for Yalkut Shimoni (2), and one column for Midrash Ha-Gadol (3). An (x) is placed in the column in which the midrash is found. Each verse is given above the comments on that verse. Suffice it to say that subtle differences in the comments are not indicated in this chart.

<u>AND THE CHILDREN STRUGGLED (Gen. 25:22)</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
1. This one ran to slay	x	x	x
2. Negation of commands	x	x	x
3. Esau antagonistic in the womb	x	x	
4. Houses of study, houses of idolatry	x	x	x
5. Rebekah despairs of her pregnancy	x	x	x
6. Fight between angels		x	
7. God makes known their actions			x
8. They rose and fell like waves			x
9. Esau threatens to kill his mother			x
10. Predictions about Esau			x

TWO NATIONS (Gen. 25:23)

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
1. Two proud ones -- Hadrian & Solomon	x	x	
2. How can your womb contain them			x
3. Both Jacob and Esau are hated	x	x	
4. Gayim: This exalted his world			x
5. One exalted the Torah			x
6. Prediction of Solomon and Vespasian			x
7. Jacob was born circumcised	x	x	x
8. Identification of Jew and Aramean	x	x	
9. If he merits...	x	x	x
10. They will behave differently			x
11. They will both trample the world			x
12. Uncertainty as to who will serve			x
13. Analogy of the grain storehouse		x	
14. Gayim -- Identification of Antoninus		x	
15. Edomite vinegar		x	
16. Caeserea and Jerusalem		x	

BEHOLD, THERE WERE TWINS (Gen. 25:24)

1. Teumin-Deficient and full script	x	x	x
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AND THE FIRST CAME FORTH RUDDY (Gen. 25:25)

1. Ramifications of FIRST	x	x	
2. A spiller of blood			x
3. Story of the bathing-master	x	x	x
4. Pearls in a tube	x	x	x

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
5. Comparison of David and Esau	x	x	x
6. Story of Diocletian	x	x	
7. Each is worthy of the mantle	x	x	
8. Attacked the great ones	x	x	x
9. Esau created for naught	x	x	x
10. I will name my firstborn	x	x	
11. Esau drank menstrual blood		x	
12. Esau hated the blood of circumcision			x
13. Esau will destroy synagogues			x
14. Mention of Esau will make hair stand			x
15. Esau, with shin, like moth			x

AND HIS HAND HAD HOLD (Gen. 25:26)

1. R. Gamliel and the prefect	x	x	
2. Esau will fall		x	
3. To cause him to fall			x
4. The kingdom of Esau			x
5. Interpretation of hazir			x

AND THE BOYS GREW (Gen. 25:27)

1. Myrtle and rose	x	x	
2. They grew like a bush			x
3. Thorn and spice			x
4. One continued school	x	x	
5. Blessed be he who freed me	x	x	x

	1	2	3
6. Esau ensnared people	x	x	x
7. Esau as trapper and fieldsman	x	x	
8. Shall we be subject to this one	x	x	
9. Shem and Eber	x	x	x
10. Path of life/death		x	
11. Jacob served Abraham		x	
12. Jacob born circumcised		x	
13. Jacob, Esau and the shechina			x
<u>NOW ISAAC LOVED ESAU (Gen. 25:28)</u>			
1. Choice meat and wine	x	x	x
2. Rebekah loved Jacob	x	x	
3. Only in appearance			x
4. Obadiah as descendent of Esau			x
<u>AND JACOB SOD POTTAGE (Gen. 25:29)</u>			
1. The death of Abraham	x	x	
2. Lentils and mourning	x		x
3. Esau's five sins	x	x	x
4. Abraham suffers for Esau's sins	x	x	
5. Humility of Jacob			x
6. Origin of Esau/Edom			x
<u>LET ME SWALLOW (Gen. 25:30)</u>			
1. Esau wanted more than his due	x	x	
2. Explanation of <u>haleiteni</u>	x		x

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
3. Ramifications of red	x	x	
4. Woe to the wicked			x
<u>SELL ME FIRST (Gen. 25:31)</u>			
1. Sell me this day	x	x	
2. Account of the birthright		x	
3. Dialogue on worth of the birthright			x
4. After the Torah, no selling of the birthright			x
5. Jacob warns Esau not to accuse him			x
<u>BEHOLD, I AM AT THE POINT TO DIE (Gen. 25:32)</u>			
1. The Holy Spirit cries out			x
2. Interpretation of <u>lama zeh li</u>	x	x	
3. Nimrod and the cloak of Adam	x	x	
<u>AND JACOB SAID: SWEAR TO ME (Gen. 25:33)</u>			
1. Jacob wanted to perform sacrifices	x	x	
2. Interpretation of <u>chayom</u>			x
3. There were two purchases			x
<u>SO ESAU DESPISED HIS BIRTHRIGHT (Gen. 25:34)</u>			
1. Joy and mourning	x	x	
2. Esau and a band of ruffians	x	x	
3. He went and his ignominy with him		x	
4. His world went out with him	x		
5. The reproach of famine	x	x	
6. The downfall of Esau			x

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jacob and Esau: Different Roles in Different Contexts

It is essential to state that in both Bereshit Rabba/Yalkut Shimoni and Midrash Ha-Gadol, the basic polarities of Jacob as the righteous and Esau as the wicked, pertain. The identification of Esau/Edom/Rome in both Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni creates a substantially different image of Esau, and to a lesser degree, of Jacob. By examining first Esau's identification with Rome, we may view the contrast in the treatment of Esau in Midrash Ha-Gadol.

A cursory glance at the charts which followed the text of the translations shows that, with one exception, there is no mention of Rome or Rome related issues in Midrash Ha-Gadol. Further examination will show that Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni share a large number of exegetical comments, whereas Bereshit Rabba and Midrash Ha-Gadol share few. Yalkut Shimoni contains many passages that are to be found in neither of the other two collections. Many of these are key passages in the development of Esau as a sinful and almost monstrous figure. These passages may best be viewed in the categories of Esau's personal nature and the more general nature of Israel's relationship to Rome. These categories are not hard and fast structures. Effort will be made to deal with passages that are related, but do not fall within the specific boundaries of these categories.

In the opening segments of each of the three collections, we find that Esau, even in the womb, was both wicked and antagonistic to Jacob. Yet, soon thereafter, Esau emerges as the most reviled of the wicked. In the Yalkut Shimoni Esau is reported to have drank his mother's menstrual blood, while still in the womb.¹ In view of the Jewish tradition concerning the impurity of menstrual blood, and the force against the consumption of blood in the laws of kashrut, this is a most horrible thing for Esau to do. The passage tells us that this is how he gained the name of Edom. Esau's identification with Rome through his evil nature is perhaps best illustrated with a passage that is found in both Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni. The rabbis comment that Esau made himself free like a field, showing his promiscuous nature.² The comment goes on to show Israel complaining to God that it has been subject to the seventy nations, and must it also be subject to one who has been violated like women? The note in the Soncino translation suggests that this is a none-too-subtle reference to "the sodomy so often practised by the Romans."³ Given even these few references, Esau (and Rome) is seen as a blood-thirsty (one should pardon the pun) and licentious figure.

We are given ample opportunity to see the nature of other Romans also. In a most interesting passage, the Emperor Diocletian is portrayed in his early years as a swineherd, preyed upon by school-children. In later years, he attempts to boil

to death Rabban Gamliel and others in a Roman bath, in vengeance for abuse at the hands of Jews years earlier.⁴ When questioned by Diocletian, the rabbis offered the answer that they did indeed insult Diocletian the swineherd, but to Diocletian, the emperor, they are loyal subjects. This passage, which does not appear in Midrash Ha-Gadol, demonstrates the importance of the historical context in the attitude of the compiler. Both in Roman dominated Palestine and Christian ruled Germany of the thirteenth century, the Jewish community had to confront hostile emperors of the Roman Empire. For the compiler of Yalkut Shimoni, the sequence of events in the passage rang true. To attribute to the emperor the mean occupation of swineherd is to perhaps, in a most subtle manner, express Jewish sentiment about the religious origins of the Holy Roman Empire, while protesting that to the political authority it holds, the Jews pledge their allegiance. It is clear that the Jews of Yemen faced problems with the government also. For them, however, the Roman analogy held no validity, and hence was not included in the Yemenite anthology.

There are numerous other passages in Yalkut Shimoni which show its preoccupation with Rome, many with heavy eschatological overtones. In commenting on Gen. 25:23, the rabbis tell us that the two nations which will be separated from Rebekah's womb will in the future be represented by Solomon of Israel and Hadrian from among the nations. The role that the descendants of Jacob

and Esau is clear; Solomon will build the temple and Hadrian will unmercifully persecute the Jews. By choosing Hadrian as the descendent of Esau to be named, Esau's identification with Rome is further solidified. If there remained any doubt as to this identification, the rabbis go on to comment that from here onward, they (meaning Jacob and Esau) shall be known as Jew and Aramean.⁴ In a note, the Soncino translation indicates that here, Aramean is synonymous with Rome.⁵ The need for morale building and a justification of the present and future position of the Jews is evident in a passage in Yalkut Shimoni which is commenting on the phrase AND ONE PEOPLE SHALL BE STRONGER THAN THE OTHER PEOPLE (Gen. 25:23). The rabbis warn that if a person says that Caeserea is still inhabited and Jerusalem is not, then do not believe him. However, if he says that Jerusalem is inhabited and Caeserea is not, then one should believe him.⁶ Caeserea, in name and in function, was the Roman city and symbol par excellence. It is most interesting to note that this passage does not appear in Bereshit Rabba. For in the time of this collection, Caeserea certainly was inhabited. The implication for the Jews of the thirteenth century was clear: keep one's faith and Jewish identity, for Jerusalem still stands. Again, it is essential to note that Jacob is associated with Jerusalem, and Esau is identified with the symbol of Rome.

In two separate passages which appear in both Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni, the exegesis on the word red or ruddy pro-

vides further identification of Esau with Rome, and with the coming of the Messiah. In commenting on Gen. 25:25, the rabbis show that Esau/Rome will be avenged as the destroyer of the temple.⁷ It further indicates that first means God will bring the first, i.e. "the anointed king" that is, the Messiah. In commenting on Gen. 25:30, the rabbis spell out the ramifications of red, as in the red pottage. Everything of Esau is red, his food, his warriors, his clothes, and his avenger.⁸ Both of these passages have clear eschatological meaning. Neither of these passages appear in Midrash Ha-Gadol. Just prior to the compilation of Midrash Ha-Gadol, the Yemenite Jewish community had suffered through the appearance of a false Messiah.⁹ It is easy to imagine why the compiler was loathe to include Messianic speculation, in particular after they had been admonished against it by Maimonides in his ¹⁰Epistle to Yemen.

As a final example of the clear identification of Esau with Rome, we turn to a further comment on Gen. 25:25. The Biblical text states that Esau was ALL OVER LIKE A HAIRY MANTLE. In both Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni, the rabbis state that all of his (Esau's) descendents are eligible for a mantle, i.e. a toga.¹¹ The implication of this passage can only be seen as Esau and his descendents will continue to wear the Roman toga, and to follow in the way of Rome, with military might and oppression of the descendents of Jacob.

In Yalkut Shimoni and in Bereshit Rabba the identification of Esau and Rome was complete. The personal characteristics of Esau were only important in that they served to develop the image of his descendents, Rome. As indicated, the compiler of Midrash Ha-Gadol did not share either the concern with identifying Esau and Rome, nor did he share the desire to build a high degree of eschatological material into his collection. There is eschatology in Midrash Ha-Gadol, but it is not of the same strident and immediate nature of the other two collections. As mentioned above, the Yemenite Jews were heavily influenced by the works and personality of Maimonides. Midrash Ha-Gadol reflects his rather more low-keyed concern with resurrection of the dead, miracles, and the world to come. There are few references to miracles in the other two collections, yet we find that such a passage as the one dealing with Diocletian is absent from Midrash Ha-Gadol. Not only does this passage deal with a Roman character, but one of the central characters is a bath-sprite who miraculously is able to spirit the rabbis around and to temper the hot water of the bath. The compiler of Yalkut Shimoni may have felt himself compelled to compete with Christian ideology on the subject of miracles, but the compiler of Midrash Ha-Gadol who came under the influence of both Maimonides and a non-miracle oriented Islam, felt no such compulsion.

Having seen the way in which the identification of Esau with Rome informed the portrayal of his nature in Bereshit Rabba

and Yalkut Shimoni, let us turn to examining the contrasting treatment of Esau and of Jacob in Midrash Ha-Gadol, and in so doing, see also how Jacob is treated in the other two midrashic compilations.

As noted at the outset of this chapter, the basic nature of the two is not in question. Jacob is clearly the righteous, and Esau is clearly the wicked. There is, however, a substantial difference in the degree to which these generalizations hold true. These differences may best be seen by exploring a few key passages, in particular those that shed a more positive light on Esau. There is no dearth of negative comments on the character of Esau in Midrash Ha-Gadol. He threatens to kill his mother if he is not permitted to come out first, he is a spiller of blood, he will destroy synagogues and houses of study in the future, and Midrash Ha-Gadol notes that even the mention of his name will make one's hair stand on end from fear. Yet, in Midrash Ha-Gadol, Jacob emerges in a less sympathetic light and Esau appears at least more human, if not sympathetic.

In the description of the methodology employed in this thesis, it was stated that those passages which were absent from one collection and present in another, were of importance as well as those similar passages which expressed subtly different ideas. It has already been noted above a few passages where Esau is given credit for some rather hideous offenses, such as drinking his mother's menstrual blood, that were in the Yalkut

Shimoni and absent from Midrash Ha-Gadol. Further examples of this sort are to be found in passages commenting on Gen. 25:27. In the Yalkut Shimoni, Jacob is said to be the one who continued school after the age of thirteen, and Esau goes on to idolatry.¹² Esau is viewed as one who practices deceit and, as seen above, is licentious and perhaps engages in sodomy.¹³ The Yalkut states that Jacob chose the path of life, and Esau that of death. Jacob is portrayed as having faithfully served his grandfather, Abraham. In a later passage, Esau and his sins are deemed responsible for Abraham losing five years of his life, so that he should not see the transgressions of his grandson.¹⁴ None of these passages are to be found in the Midrash Ha-Gadol. The passage dealing with Abraham exists, but no mention is made of the years that he lost as a result of Esau. In Midrash Ha-Gadol Jacob is said to have drawn people under the wings of the Shechina, and Esau to have kept them from under the wings of the Shechina. Esau is clearly wicked, but the degree of his villification is less.

Both Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni make mention of Rebekah's love for Jacob, and Midrash Ha-Gadol does not.¹⁵ Conversely, Midrash Ha-Gadol includes a passage in which Isaac is said to have loved Esau in appearance, for if he had not shown love for him, Esau's actions may have been even worse.¹⁶ This passage amply shows the more human concerns of Isaac and of Esau, not in the stereotypical framework of the other two collections.

In a similar fashion, Jacob is given a more human, albeit less pleasant character in Midrash Ha-Gadol. In Midrash Ha-Gadol as in the other two collections, Rebekah is seen going to the houses of other women and despairing of her pregnancy.¹⁷ Yet, God questions of her, "If the world will not be able to contain these two, how do you expect your womb to hold them?" Esau shares the lust for power with his brother in Midrash Ha-Gadol, and the compiler is not so quick to conclude that it shall be Jacob who dominates, from the Biblical text. It states that "I am not sure if the elder shall serve or the younger shall serve."¹⁸ He turns to additional proof texts to insure his agreement with the tradition. Again we find an unwillingness to abandon Esau to the role given to him by other traditions.

The best view of the differences in the treatment of Jacob and Esau is in the dialogues about the selling of the birthright. In the account in Yalkut Shimoni Esau is portrayed as a sinful and ignorant boor who rightly deserves to have his birthright taken away. Jacob points out to him that he is drawn to this world, whereas Jacob is more interested in the world to come, so why not sell the birthright, especially in view of Esau's denial of the resurrection of the dead. Esau gladly gives it up, and is greatly bewildered years later when he sees Jacob has acquired the riches of this world also. He attempts to recoup his losses and talk Jacob into splitting the world to come and this world and its riches also. Jacob, of course,

demurs and is on his way. The dialogue is very much different in Midrash Ha-Gadol. It opens by asking the rhetorical question, allegedly asked by those lacking in faith, "Is it customary for a man when he give his neighbor a dish of lentils, he says to him: Sell me your birthright? Then he sells it to him?" Esau comes in and his eyes are affected by the smoke. Quite unlike the account in Yalkut Shimoni, here it is Esau who engages Jacob in philosophical discourse. In the end, Esau sells him the birthright, but Jacob wants to cover all possible recriminations that Esau might bring back to him at a later time, and insists that because there is a world to come and a giving of reward, that Esau should not ever say that Jacob beguiled him. In relating each account to the cultural context of the two midrashic collections, a clearer picture of their origins emerges.

The passage in Yalkut Shimoni expresses a deep concern for both this world and the world to come. Jacob is seen as achieving success in both worlds. Because he is faithful to God and Jewish law, he is to inherit the world to come. He is also able to amass a fortune in this world for the same reasons. The Jews of Germany in the beginning of the thirteenth century needed reassurance that their suffering would be rewarded in the world to come, and that if one maintained one's Jewish identity, that success in this world was possible also. For the readers of the Yemenite collection, there was less concern with the economics

of the situation. As indicated in the above chapter, they suffered under attempts at conversion, yet they suffered far less than their European co-religionists in the economic area. The philosophical element is important to note. In the account in Midrash Ha-Gadol, Esau sounds like a rationalist trying to de-bunk the Jewish ideals of Jacob. The fight over the acceptance of Maimonides and his ideas, and in particular that of resurrection of the dead, touched the Yemenite community and deeply divided them, as cited above. Esau could be given a more intelligent nature, but he still had to lose. Perhaps, if only to justify their faith in Maimonides and his remaining within the fold of the tradition.

In not sharing the identification of Esau with Rome, the compiler of Midrash Ha-Gadol had more leeway in expressing some positive sentiments about Esau and his descendents. The most striking of which is the passage dealing with the lineage of the prophet Obadiah.¹⁹ In the end, Esau is condemned for not having learned from the deeds of the two righteous people that he lived between: Isaac and Rebekah. Yet, it is clear that in direct opposition to the direction of Yalkut Shimoni, a descendent of Esau is seen as a righteous person, and certainly not a Roman. This passage lends credence to the above expressed view that within the Yemenite anthologies, there was definite tradition of not attributing the 'fourth kingdom' of Daniel's vision to a partnership of Ishmael and Edom. The passage is

based on the relationship of Obadiah to Edom. Yet, it disassociates itself from the tradition of the European midrashim concerning the descendants of Esau, and puts no onus on the descendants of Ishmael. It should be noted that in none of these passages does this partnership find mention. The segment of Midrash Ha-Gadol dealt with here can in no way be called conclusive, but it does seem to indicate a trend. It should be further noted that in both Bereshit Rabba and Yalkut Shimoni the visionary passage in Dan. 2:35 is associated with the Roman image of Esau and his descendants being worthy of the mantle (toga).²⁰ This passage is conspicuously absent from Midrash Ha-Gadol.

One final passage needs to be brought forth to show the differing attitudes concerning Esau. In Yalkut Shimoni the rabbis comment on Esau being ruddy by stating that it is as if he were spilling blood. They amplify the comment by recounting how Samuel saw that David also was ruddy. Samuel becomes afraid that David will have a murderous spirit like that of Esau. God assures him that David will kill only at the behest of the Sanhedrin, whereas Esau slays on his own whim. In Midrash Ha-Gadol the polarity exists between "a completely wicked person such as Esau" and "a completely righteous person such as David." Yet, there is no mention of Esau spilling blood, no mention of Samuel's fears that David will be like Esau. The passages are similar, but the passage from Midrash Ha-Gadol does not evince the monstrous

image of Esau that is part and parcel of the other two collections. This passage in its subtle nuance is indicative of the whole strain of thought in Midrash Ha-Gadol. The compiler was not seeking to create an aura of horror around Esau/Edom/Rome. In this way, Esau and Jacob were able to emerge from the midrashic text in a manner more closely in line with the Biblical text. It is in this matter that we most clearly see the influence of the cultural context on the two compilers in how they chose what midrashim to include and which to exclude, and how to change the nuance of similar passages, found in both.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Yalkut Shimon1, p. 521.
2. Bereshit Rabba, p. 566; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 522.
3. Bereshit Rabba, p. 566.
4. Bereshit Rabba, 63:7; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 517.
5. Bereshit Rabba, p. 561.
6. Yalkut Shimon1, p. 517.
7. Ibid, p. 518; Bereshit Rabba, 63:8.
8. Bereshit Rabba, 63:12; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 525.
9. Abraham S. Halkin, Moses Maimonides' Epistle to Yemen, American Academy for Jewish Research, Press of Maurice Jacobs, Inc., New York, 1952, Introduction.
10. Ibid.
11. Bereshit Rabba, 63:8; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 520.
12. Yalkut Shimon1, p. 522.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid, p. 524.
15. Bereshit Rabba, 63:10; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 523.
16. Midrash Ha-Gadol, p. 442.
17. Ibid, p. 434; Bereshit Rabba, 63:6; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 516.
18. Midrash Ha-Gadol, p. 437.
19. Ibid, p. 442.
20. Bereshit Rabba, 63:8; Yalkut Shimon1, p. 521.

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