Jacob and Esau, Story of

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

The first recorded set of twins in the HB/OT, Jacob and Esau are the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Their interactions, part of the Jacob cycle (Gen 25:19–35:29) in the ancestral literature of Genesis, are generally marked by competition and trickery, and raise questions about divine election. While scholarship is not decided on the origins and composition of the Jacob cycle, most of the passages in which Jacob and Esau interact are attributed to the non-Priestly literature, with relatively few Priestly additions.

Jacob and Esau's struggle begins in the womb. Before their birth, an oracle is given to Rebekah saying that there are two nations within her and that the older will serve the younger (Gen 25:23). This reflects the biblical pattern of the firstborn being supplanted by a younger son and seems to justify Jacob's later behavior by showing that God's preference for him came before birth. This view is supported by passages in the HB/OT which claim that God loved and chose Jacob but hated Esau (Mal 1:2–3; Isa 41:8). However, Hosea seems to disapprove of Jacob's actions (12:3–4, ET: 2–3). The fulfillment of this oracle is witnessed during the Iron Age when Edom was subject to the kingdom of Israel and later Judah.

Emerging from the womb first, Esau is described as being red (MT *ʾaḏmônî*) and covered in hair (*śēʿār*), which are plays on his alternative name "Edom" (*ʾĔḏôm*) and "Seir" (*Śēʿîr*), a synonym of Edom. Jacob is born clutching Esau's heel (*ʿāqēb*), a play on the name Jacob (*Yaʿăqōb*).

As the firstborn, Esau is entitled to the birthright, a double portion of the patrimony (see Deut 21:15–17), but Jacob convinces Esau to sell it to him (Gen 25:29–34). Jacob also tricks Isaac into giving him the blessing intended for Esau (Gen 27:1–40).

Jacob and Esau reconcile after two decades apart, and fracticide is avoided (Gen 33:1–17). Yet instead of following Esau to the land of Seir (Gen 33:14), Jacob turns and settles in Canaan. His decision shows that he does not want to blend his clan with that of Esau.

While Esau is represented as being short-sighted, Jacob is shown to be cunning and resourceful. The overarching depiction of Jacob in the HB/OT is positive; he is listed as an heir of the covenant and called a servant of God (i.e., Exod 32:13; Lev 26:42).

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Megan Sauter

II. Judaism

■ Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism ■ Rabbinic Judaism ■ Medieval Judaism ■ Modern Judaism

A. Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism

During the Second Temple period, the Jacob and Esau story maintained many of its biblical elements, at the same time that it underwent a var-

iety of transformations and alterations. Narrative elements such as the apparent fraternal antagonism and Jacob's divine selection over Esau served as the creative fodder for a number of authors in their articulation of these older traditions.

The book of *Jubilees* (2nd cent. BCE) recasts many of the elements of the story in order to vilify Esau more effectively, while it simultaneously elevates Jacob's status as an upright patriarch. Following their birth, the "perfect and upright" Jacob is favored not only by Rebekah but also by Abraham and eventually by Isaac due to his familial piety and righteousness, while Esau, who was born "harsh, rustic, and hairy" (see 19:13), loses even Isaac's favor due to his various impious deeds (cf. *T. Gad* 7:4; *L.A.B.* 32.5). *Jubilees* also portrays Jacob as divinely-favored as well, having been separated by God from among the other nations already at the conclusion of creation (2:20). As a whole, *Jubilees* juxtaposes the brothers, emphasizing characteristics which accentuate Jacob's status as righteous and divinely-chosen and Esau's status as wicked and rejected by God (cf. Mal 1:2–3; Sir 44:22–23; Rom 9:13; *4 Ezra* 3:15–19)

The tendency to contrast the righteousness of Jacob with the wickedness of Esau is also apparent in the various works of Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 40 CE). For Philo, while Esau's hairiness, redness, and hunter-occupation all reflect his ignobility and the irrationality of his actions (e.g., *Leg.* 2.59; 3.2), Jacob's hairlessness and domestic lifestyle typify his virtue and rationality (e.g., *Ebr.* 9–10). This is most thoroughly stated in *QG* 4.158–245, where Philo allegorically elucidates the entire narrative up until Gen 28:9. In particular, Philo states that Esau's ruddiness, name, and occupation all indicate his aggressive and savage disposition, while Jacob's heel-grasping and tent-dwelling nature imply his moral excellence (cf. *Leg.* 3.191). In turn, episodes such as Esau's selling of his birthright, Jacob's acquisition of the blessing, and their respective choices of wives are all interpreted by Philo to indicate Jacob's outright virtue and wisdom in contrast to Esau's brash and immoral character (cf. *Sacr.* 4, 120, 135).

In contrast to the denigration of Esau and exultation of Jacob found in *Jubilees* and Philo, the Jewish historian Josephus (1st cent. CE) in his *Antiquities* takes a somewhat different approach to the narrative (1.257–2.6). Most notably, while Josephus purges Jacob of a number of negative traits (e.g., his role as "supplanter" or trickster), unlike Philo and *Jubilees* he does not do so at the expense of Esau's character. Thus, while Philo and *Jubilees* emphasize Esau's sexual impurity and crudeness in his procurement of Canaanite wives, Josephus instead states that Isaac was displeased due to the political repercussions of Esau's actions. Moreover, while *Jubilees* (cf. Gen 27:39–40) portrays Isaac giving Esau a bleak answer following Jacob's acquisition of the blessing, Josephus in contrast depicts Isaac imparting a lesser blessing to Esau of skill in the hunt and bodily strength. In turn, while Philo ignores Rebekah's pronouncement that two nations dwell within her womb (Gen 25:23), Josephus mentions this detail, explicitly, equating Esau with Seir and Edom/Idumea (cf. 1 Macc 5:3, 65), as well as including a truncated genealogy tracing Esau's progeny to Idumea (cf. Gen 36; *Jub.* 38:15–24; *L.A.B.* 8.4–5, 23.9).

One of the most significant additions to the Jacob and Esau narrative in the Second Temple period is the battle between the sons of Jacob and the sons of Esau, an episode found in *Jub.* 37–38 and in the *T. Jud.* 9 (1st–2nd cent. CE). In both texts, Esau and his sons attack Jacob and his sons following the deaths of Isaac and Rebekah, and in both texts Jacob and his sons ultimately triumph, with Esau dying by an arrow wound and his remaining sons subjugated into servitude and tribute to Jacob's posterity. This episode may serve as a later elaboration upon the biblical claim that Esau would eventually come to serve Jacob (Gen 25:23; cf. Philo, *Leg.* 3.88–89) as well as an embellishment exemplifying the wickedness and violence of Esau and his children (cf. Gen 27:39; Obad 1:10; Philo, *QG* 4.235).

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Blake A. Jurgens

B. Rabbinic Judaism

The rabbis understood the biblical story of Jacob and Esau as a typology for later relations between Israel and Rome/Christianity. Thus, in their interpretations of the biblical narrative, the rabbis acquit Jacob of deviousness and trickery while assuming that Esau was evil from the start.

The struggles between Jacob and Esau began in the womb. According to *BerR* 63:6, whenever the pregnant Rebekah passed a synagogue or house of study, Jacob struggled within her to get out; whenever she passed an idol, Esau struggled to get out. The twins are also contrasted in their youths: Jacob studied in the house of study of Shem and Ever (*BerR* 63:7; *ARN* 2:5; *bBB* 17a) while Esau murdered, raped a betrothed woman, and heretically denied God and the resurrection of the dead (*BerR* 63:8, 12, 13, 14). This distinction was written into their very bodies: Esau spurned his circumcision (his birthright) and refused to circumcise his sons (Christians), while Jacob/Israel upheld his birth-

right and passed down the practice of circumcision to his sons (Jews). Thus Jacob merited to acquire Esau's birthright as well (*PRE* 28).

The Talmud recounts that the day that Esau sold his birthright to Jacob was the day that Abraham died. Jacob made the traditional Jewish mourners' food of lentils, while Esau, enraged by the injustice of the righteous Abraham's death, spent the day sinning and proclaiming heresies (*BerR* 63:19, *bBB* 16b). According to *PRE* 35, Jacob was justified in obtaining the birthright in part because Esau consistently refused to share the meat of the animals he hunted. However, for the rabbis, Jacob's theft of Esau's birthright was part of the divine plan. When Esau went hunting for Isaac's meal, God sent an angel to free the animals from his traps in order to delay Esau's return, so that Rebekah could convince Jacob to impersonate his brother (*BerR* 67:1).

In *Bereshit Rabbah*, R. Yannai reads the story of the brothers' eventual reconciliation through the typological method. At their meeting, Esau attempted to attack Jacob by biting his neck (Gen 33:4; "But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck *and kissed him*, and they wept"; the word for "and kissed him" *wa-yishaqehu* has dots over it, which demanded an explanation; according to Yannai, Esau did not come to kiss Jacob [*le-nashqo*] but rather to bite him [*le-nashkho*]), but God performed a miracle and Jacob's neck turned to marble. Thus the biblical story tells us that both brothers cried: Esau cried because of the pain in his teeth, and Jacob cried because of the pain in his neck. By contrast, R. Simeon b. Eleazar understood Esau's kiss as sincere and the reconciliation as genuine (*BerR* 78:9).

Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliʿezer 37 recounts that, like Isaac and Ishmael before them, Jacob and Esau came together to bury their father. But Isaac had left them his property to share equally. Esau chose to inherit all of Isaac's material possessions, and Jacob chose to inherit the rights to the land of Israel and the cave of Machpelah. Thus Rome had material wealth, and the Jews had the land of Israel and the traditions of their ancestors.

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Sara Ronis

C. Medieval Judaism

Medieval readings of the story of Jacob and Esau were shaped by the typology of Jacob representing Israel and Esau being identified with Edom and Amalek in the Bible and with Rome and Christianity in rabbinic literature. The strife between the brothers was also incorporated into the historical-eschatological framework of the four empires in the book of Daniel. The defeat of the fourth empire will herald the start of the messianic era; therefore its role and fate were ardently debated. The historical situation of the Jews living in the Diaspora under Christian or Muslim rule led to exegetical reactions either justifying or undermining the Jews' identity as God's chosen people.

Against this background it is first and foremost Jewish-Christian polemics that influenced the medieval reading of the story of Jacob and Esau. The antagonism between the twin brothers was intensified by exegetical embellishments. While Jacob was elevated and glorified, Esau was singled out as the prototype of the sinner and his breed as a despised nation (see "Esau"). Esau is shown as a murderer who strives to kill Jacob, and the descendants of the two brothers struggle in war against each other. An extreme view is taken by Rashi (1040–1105) whose commentaries exude intense hostility to Esau. He maintains his negative view even at the cost of deviation from the *peshat*, while his students were not ready to follow this path (see Lockshin; Grossman).

Christian exegetes claimed that Christians were the new Israel/Jacob, while Jews served as the elder brother Esau, who was replaced by his younger brother. Therefore, they contested the Jewish version of the typology pointing to flaws in the Jewish genealogical exegesis according to which Rome was equated with the Kittim, the sons of Tubal, the son of Japheth, and not the children of Esau. Medieval Jewish authors reacted to this exegetical challenge in different ways. An ethnological answer to this problem was given by *Sefer Yosippon*, the Hebrew paraphrase of the writings of Flavius Josephus produced in 10th-century Italy. Its first chapter includes a contemporaneous updated version of the table of peoples from Gen 10. The second chapter presents an alternative foundation story of Rome in which Zepho the son of Eliphaz the son of Esau becomes the companion of the Roman progenitor Aeneas and finally the king of the Kittim who lived in the region of Rome. One of his descendants is a certain Romulus, the builder of Rome. This version of Rome's origins conflates the Kittim with the descendants of Esau und thus counters the Christian critique of the faulty genealogy with an ethnological excursus on the history of the peoples in the fashion of the ancient authors, especially Josephus, although his works were not the source for *Yosippon*'s story of Zepho. Instead there may be an Arabic source (Sela). This story was widespread in medieval Jewish literature; it is alluded to by exegetes (Naḥmanides ad Gen 32:9; 36:42; 50:9; see Dönitz: 162–63) and reworked by *Sefer ha-Yashar* (ca. 11th–12th cent., ch. 11, 16, 17, ed. Dan).

The Jewish exegetes living under Muslim rule faced another exegetical problem: the integration of

Islam into the Danielic scheme of the four empires (see "Four Empires IV. Judaism C. Medieval Judaism"). Saadia Gaon (880–942) achieved this by combining Ishmael (i.e., Islam) and Edom (Byzantium/Rome/Christianity) as the representative of the fourth empire with reference to the materiality of the statue in Dan 2:30–35. In the writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089–1164), Rome is united with the representative of the third empire, Greece (short commentary on Dan 2:39 with reference to *Yosippon*; see also Abraham Ibn Daud: 237–40). In his commentary on Gen 27:40, Ibn Ezra reduced the role of Esau/Edom as representative of Christianity on a theological level, detaching any political or genealogical relevance by rejecting the identification of Edom and the Kittim (see also ad Ps 137:7).

With the Reconquista of Muslim Spain Ishmael's role was dissolved and Edom/Rome was reinstated as the fourth empire (Naḥmanides in *Sefer ha-Geʾullah* [Book of Redemption], ed. Chavel: 283–87). A synthetic view combining all medieval aspects of the conflict of Jacob and Esau in the shadow of the historical situation of the Jews under Christian dominion, especially in the wake of the expulsion from Spain in 1492, is presented by Isaac Abarbanel (1437–1508) in his works *Maʿyenei ha-yeshuʿah* (The Wells of Salvation) and *Mashmiʿa yeshuʿah* (Proclaimer of Salvation) in order to foster the hope of salvation and redemption (see Awerbuch: 141–65).

The Zohar (ca. 13th cent.) adds a mystical-sexual-historical dimension to the story of Jacob and Esau enhancing the motif of menstrual impurity attributed to the children of Esau, i. e., Christianity (see Wolfson: 216–20). Esau is identified with the evil serpent that has dominion over the Shekhinah. When Jacob purchased the birthright from Esau, he not only saved the Holy from the demonic, but also rectified the sin of Eve and the Serpent and thus reestablished the cosmic order.

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Saskia Dönitz

D. Modern Judaism

Sibling rivalry and betrayal notwithstanding, traditional Jewish exegesis tended to characterize Jacob and Esau as the good brother and the evil brother respectively. Jacob was portrayed as the "hero," Esau as the "villain," who did not deserve the primogeniture or the patriarchal blessing. Moreover, Esau/Edom became associated midrashically with Rome, and later with Christianity. Esau was seen as persecuting Jacob, just as Romans and later Christians would persecute Jews.

In the modern period, many Jewish interpreters have continued to take a negative view of Esau, although sometimes in a modern vein. For example, Maurice Samuel (1895–1972) writes that Esau "was a throwback, a case of arrested development" (163). Other modern Jewish writers are more even-handed in evaluating the siblings. Pesach Schindler (b. 1931) calls attention to the voices in the midrash that praised Esau. In a 1963 lecture, Rabbi Henry E. Kagan (1906–1969) argued that in their formative years each child was only half-loved. "Insufficiently loved by his feminine father, Jacob was filled with fear. Insufficiently loved by his masculine mother, Esau was filled with hate." Kagan further suggests that the very hardships the brothers faced allowed them eventually to "respect each other and be reconciled" (quoted in Plaut/Stein: 187, 1508).

Jonathan Sacks (b. 1948) struggles to defend Jacob's actions in the theft of the blessing (Gen 27). At first he disparages Esau, describing him as "impetuous, mercurial", and remarking that Esau fails "to understand what the covenant requires." Yet, according to Sacks, Esau acted honorably toward his father, and took care of him during the decades that Jacob was away in Haran. Jacob eventually understood this and at their reconciliation gave "back to Esau the blessings he had wrongly taken from him." In Sacks' view, Jacob made "an honest mistake, and it is a mark of Jacob's greatness that he recognized it and made amends to Esau." R. Loraine Heller stresses Esau's overt behavior at the reconciliation (Gen 33), and argues against the midrashic view that stresses Esau's insincerity (see Rashi on Gen 33:4).

> In Judaism, we usually put more emphasis on actions than on intentions, on the acts we perform rather than on the emotions we feel. Seen in this way, Esau's kiss can simply be taken at face value as a sign of reconciliation. Do Esau's feelings really matter at this moment?

His overt behavior indicates peace: Do we need to be concerned whether he is feeling vengeful inwardly?

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David J. Zucker

III. Christianity

The Christian reception of the Jacob and Esau story in the HB/OT owes its primary shaping to the way that Paul interprets this story in Rom 9-11 as an allegory for divine election. The basis for this interpretation in Christianity stems from Paul's citation of Gen 25 : 23 ("The older shall serve the younger") and Mal 1 : 2-3 ("Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated") in Rom 9 : 13. Paul's purpose was to demonstrate that divine election, not physical descent or human merit, determine one's status before God in faith. Thus, Paul saw Jacob's reception of the blessing over Esau to be providential; God loved Jacob and hated Esau even before they were born (Rom 9 : 10-16; Mal 1 : 2-3).

Early Christian authors further developed the theme of divine election in the Jacob and Esau story via Paul as an allegory for the relation between Christians and Jews. They saw the story as Paul retold it in Romans to depict Christians as the authentic descendents of Jacob and true recipients of Jacob's election. For example, Irenaeus of Lyons claimed that "the latter people has snatched away the blessings of the former, just as Jacob took the blessing from Esau … " (*Haer.* 4.21). Early theologians utilized the story to explain that either: (1) God foreknew the Jews' disbelief in Christ and, reciprocally, belief amongst "Gentiles" (Ambrosiaster, *Comm. epist. Paul.* [CSEL 81/1 : 312–13]; Pelagius, *Ad Romanos* [Souter: 74–75]; Augustine, *Serm.* 4.12 [CCL 41 : 28-29]) or (2) that Jacob and Esau served as types of "belief" and "unbelief" drawn from both Jews and the church and, in this way, the story served as a warning against false belief within the church itself (Ambrosiaster, *Comm. epist Paul.* [CSEL 81/1 : 312–3]; Origen, *Comm. Rom.* 7.15).

The early church's allegorical interpretation of Jacob and Esau was sharpened in the 16th century when the Reformation saw escalated opposition to works righteousness in favor of divine grace exemplified by God's election of Jacob. Martin Luther's correlation between Jacob and Esau and Christians and Jews was part of Luther's theological polemic against the Jews, who he saw as deniers of Christ. He likened the "unbelieving Jews" to Esau because he thought the benefits of their birthright are specified by the law, but the law effects nothing in terms of actually receiving God's favor (Luther, *Genesisvorlesungen* [WA 43 : 508]; *Römerbriefvorlesungen* [WA 56 : 395-96]). Alternatively, God bestows grace on whomever God chooses, in Luther's thinking, just as "He who calls" blesses Jacob over Esau before birth or action. Therefore, Luther thought Jacob stood for "the future people of God" who likewise receive God's call and promise and, on this basis, believe God (Luther, *De servo arbitrio* [WA 18 : 723–25]). Going against the traditional association of the Jews with Esau, John Calvin correlated the Jews to Jacob as those God elected to receive God's love. Calvin uniquely saw this as the basis for God's wrath against the Jews, however, because despite "so great a favour" Jews were "not stimulated to adore the divine majesty" (Calvin, *Comm. Rom.* 9.14). Calvin's acerbic tone towards the Jews in his interpretation of the Jacob and Esau story is not reiterated throughout his theology as it was for Luther, however, because Calvin positively associated the Jews as harbingers of natural law.

Post-WWII, theologians have abandoned the Jacob and Esau story to explain the relation between Christians and Jews, giving way to new systematic proposals that see Jews and Christians as co-members of God's earthly kingdom. For example, Kendall Soulen critiques the harm done by Christian supercessionism to Jewish-Christian relations *and* to theological understandings of God's work in human history by outlining the economic, punitive, and structural dimensions of Christian supercessionism (29–32). He isolates the root of this problem to lie in Christianity's emphasis on creation for redemption, not creation for consummation, because the former assumes that Israel's history between the fall and the incarnation unfolds the need for a redeemer. Instead, Soulen proposes that a theology developed around creation for consummation can see God's relationship with Israel and with Christians through Christ come together in God's reign of peace on earth (173–76). Marvin Sweeney makes a similar proposal, calling on human beings, both Jews and Christians, to take on a greater role in preserving the sanctity, well-being, and fundamental justice in the world (22). In framing the Jewish-Christian relation in these new ways, theologians today are working to move past the troubling reception history of the Jacob and Esau story in Christianity.

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Candace Kohli

IV. Islam

The story of Jacob and Esau is not found in the Qurʾān, although the Qurʾān does acknowledge Jacob as a prophet and includes him in the list of patriarchs (e.g., S 6 : 84; 19 : 49; 21 : 72; 29 : 27).

Their story is told in other Islamic sources that closely parallel the biblical record. In one Islamic account, Jacob is said to have emerged first from his mother's womb, but Esau threatened to block her womb and kill her. Since Esau resisted in this way (*ʿaṣā*), he was called *ʿAyṣ* or *ʿAyṣā* (Firestone: 254; Rippin: 2).

Ibn Kathīr (1301–1373), a compiler of "Stories of the Prophets" (*Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*) summarizes and retells much of the biblical account in which Jacob steals his brother's birthright. This creates enmity between the two and Esau threatens to kill Jacob, who moves away to live with his uncle (Ibn Kathīr: 121–22). Later, Esau and Jacob are reconciled.

Ibn Kathīr also recounts extra-biblical material and adds commentary to the biblical account. Accordingly, he notes that after Jacob and Esau had been reconciled, they walked together past Jerusalem where Jacob purchased property and built an altar to God. This is identified as the al-Aqṣā Mosque (ibid.: 125–26).

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Charles Tieszen

V. Literature

The cultural reception of the story of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25–27; 32–33) centers mainly on two discursive themes: Esau's loss of his birthright through Jacob's deception, and sibling rivalry in the struggle for parental affection.

Augustine was the first patristic writer to stress the foolishness of Esau bartering away his birthright. Augustine considers him a figure of the proud and carnal man, who gives up his divine election for the material world. Quoting Rom 9 : 11–13, where Paul cites the words of the Prophet Malachi, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," Augustine draws a link between this narrative and his concept of predestination: God predestined those whom he foresaw would believe (*Civ.* 5.4). John Milton builds upon Augustine in his politically charged religious poem, *Eikonoklastes* (1649), where Esau is made a figure of the Presbyterian reprobates and Jacob, the figure of the Puritan elect.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Romantic writers began to invert the normative interpretation of the biblical story, indicting Jacob as the one who defrauds Esau, and valorizing Esau as the idealistic wanderer untethered from the confinements of society. The poet William Blake (1757–1827), in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), suggests that hairy, aboriginal Esau (Edom) will reclaim his birthright as the elder son, and expands this interpretation in his work, *America, A Prophecy* (1793), where the main figure is identified as Esau, a hairy redheaded rebel from France who inspires the American Revolution. Curiously, this interpretation of Esau is given new expression in the written adaptations of the medieval legend of Robin Hood, primarily in Joseph Ritson's 1796 collection of poems and ballads. Esau is linked with Robin Hood: both are nomadic, both are hunters, and Esau shot "venison" with his bow for his father.

A secondary discourse of Jacob and Esau finds expression in cultural themes on sibling rivalry and the quest to win the love and support of a parental figure. While many examples can be identified in this sub-genre, one of the most famous of them is certainly the 20th-century work of Nobel Laureate John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (1952). This classic American text is an explicit allegory of sibling rivalry inspired by the Genesis accounts between Cain and Abel, and Jacob and Esau. There are two sets of brothers in the novel: Adam and Charles, and the fraternal twins, Aron and Caleb. Adam and Aron match up with the biblical Jacob and Abel, while Charles and Caleb match up to Esau and Cain.

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Mark Bosco

VI. Visual Arts

Christian imagery depicts the conflict-ridden story of the brothers Jacob and Esau (Gen 25–26) with three scenes in particular: Esau's selling of his birthright to Jacob (Gen 25 : 27–34), Isaac's blessing of Jacob (Gen 27 : 1–40), and the reconcilation of Jacob and Esau (Gen 33 : 1–20). In Jewish manuscripts, Esau is also depicted bringing Isaac his venison (*Sarajevo Haggadah*, 1320–35, Sarajevo, National Museum, fol. 10).

The story of the sold birthright often emerges in the larger picture cycles and illuminated manuscripts (*Vienna Genesis*, first half of the 6th cent., Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek cod. theol. gr. 31, fol. 8r; *Ashburnham pentateuch*, 7th cent., Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS nouv. acq. lat. 2334, fol. 25). In the *Biblia pauperum*, Esau's decision to exchange his birthright for lentil stew when he comes home hungry after the hunt is interpreted morally and set together typologically with the fall, the temptation of Jesus, and the lives of the prophets. In the 17th and 18th centuries, when moral and typological interpretations were less popular, the biblical scene is arranged instead like paintings of interior scenes (Hendrick Ter

Brugghen, before 1614, Bodemuseum, Berlin; Matthias Stomer, mid-17th cent., State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg). In a dim, candle-lit inner room, the focus is directed entirely towards the interaction between and the relationship of the two brothers (Paul Troger, 1738–42, Niederösterreichisches Landesmuseum, Vienna).

Isaac's blessing of Jacob, or more precisely Jacob's trickery in disguising himself as his brother, is depicted more frequently. Jacob is often accompanied by his mother Rebekah; sometimes Esau also makes an appearance in the background. One of the earliest representations of this scene survives in the Via Latina Catacombs (320/350, Rome), where the components are already quite well developed: Isaac lies in a bed; he touches Jacob's arm, emphasizing his blindness. His hand forms a gesture of blessing. Jacob mostly appears as a handsome young man, while Esau is often depicted more negatively, hidden in the shadowy background. Jacob's trickery is not expressed in the image itself; instead the beauty and the elevated gesture of blessing emphasize the legitimacy of succession. In medieval and early Renaissance variants of the subject, which often occur in programs (Isaac-Master [ascribed to Giotto], fresco, ca. 1290, San Franceso, Assisi; Master Bertram, *Isaac's Blessing*, Grabow altarpiece, 1379, Hamburger Kunsthalle; Lorenzo Ghiberti, 1425–52, *Story of Jacob and Esau*, bronze relief panel from the Gate of Paradise, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, → see *EBR* 7, plate 15b), Isaac is sometimes depicted sitting on a chair. In typological representations, the blessing of Isaac refers to the Eucharist due to the relationship between food and blessing. It is also depicted as a prefiguration of the supper at Emmaus and of doubting Thomas, since Isaac is often shown hesitantly touching Jacob's arm.

In the modern era, the focus is directed to the relationship between the father and son. For example, Govert Flinck (1639, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) paints bright light on the faces and the gesture of blessing in the center of the otherwise shadowy interior, but Jacob and his mother's duplicity are not dramatized. In modern Jewish painting, Marc Chagall draws on the intimate scene of the father and son again (1931–39, Saarlandmuseum, Saarbrücken). One of the most recent, sculptural representations reduces the scene to the head and hands of the protagonists (Heinrich Apel, 2003–6, Naumburg Cathedral, Naumburg; see fig. 11).

The reconciliation of Esau and Jacob is seen rarely in Christian art. This story is found primarily in illuminated Bibles (*Millstatt Genesis*, ca. 1200, Klagenfurt, Kärntner Landesarchiv cod. 6/19 fol. 46r; Gustave Doré, *Holy Bible*, 1865; Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, engraving, "*Jacob's Reconciliation with Esau*," 1839, in *Die Bibel in Bildern*) and in the Dutch historical painting of the 17th and 18th centuries. Set in most cases in a landscape amid a great gathering of people, either Jacob is shown kneeling before Esau, or the embrace of the two brothers is depicted. As such, the reconciliation is developed as a highly emotional and dramatic moment (for example, Peter Paul Rubens, 1624, Pinakothek Munich; Rembrandt van Rijn, ca. 1655, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen, Berlin).

Fig. 11 Apel, H., "Isaac blesses Jacob" (2003-6)

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Claudia Gärtner

VII. Music

Some medieval Latin chants refer to the story of Jacob and Esau, especially to Jacob's fear of Esau at the point where Jacob returns from Laban with Rachel, Leah, and his household (Gen 32). One medieval responsory paraphrases Gen 32: 6–8, 12:

> *Cum audisset Jacob quod Esau veniret contra eum divisit filios suos et uxores dicens si percusserit Esau unam turmam salvabitur altera libera me domine qui dixisti mihi multiplicabo semen tuum sicut stellas caeli et sicut harenam maris quae prae multitudine numerari non potest.*
>
> (When Jacob heard that Esau would come against him, he divided his sons and wives saying, if Esau strikes one company, the other will be saved. Free me, Lord, you who said to me "I will increase your offspring as

> the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea which cannot be counted because of their number." (*Cantus Database*)

Heinrich Schütz, Johann Hermann Schein, Dietrich Buxtehude and Johann Sebastian Bach all set Jacob's line from Gen 32 : 26, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me" in German (Schipperges: 37). This exclamation, connected to Jacob's fight with God, occurs at what appears as a dramatic turning point of the story, before the reconciliatory meeting between Jacob and Esau in Gen 33.

German composer Rudolf Wagner-Régency composed a "biblical scene" for the stage based on the story of Jacob and Esau, *Esau und Jakob* for four solo voices, a speaker, and string orchestra (Gera 1930; Drew). Some oratorios treating the patriarch Jacob may (also) refer to the story of Jacob and Esau (see "Jacob [Patriarch]").

The last two of the five movements constituting Darius Milhaud's *Les rêves de Jacob* (1948, Jacob's Dreams) reference Jacob's second dream, his mentioned fight with the angel Gen 32 : 24–25, his blessing and the change of his name to Israel, Gen 32 : 26–28 (Dowling Long/Sawyer: 116, see also "Jacob's Ladder VI. Music").

The seventh stanza of Paul Gerhardt's German Lutheran Baroque hymn "Voller Wunder, voller Kunst" (17th cent.) briefly refers to Jacob fleeing from Esau at the beginning of the story (Gen 27–28, "Jacob flees from Esau's face,/ And he meeteth Rachel fair" (*Hymnary.org*; English translation of Gerhardt's hymn by John Kelly, 1867; full German text at *Glaubensstimme*). Searching *Hymnary.org* for Esau one finds some very few other hymns referencing the story of Jacob and Esau (see also Dowling Long/Sawyer: 265 for another hymn referring to this narrative).

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VIII. Film

The biblical account of sibling rivalry and reconciliation between Jacob and Esau has provoked both straightforward and more oblique responses in film. Given the interlocking relations among biblical figures, it is not surprising to find other characters and narratives embedded within most productions; and often visual and aural details are anachronistic, particularly in animations intended, ironically enough, for educational purposes.

Early handlings of the story include *Giacobbe ed Esau* (dir. Mario Landi, 1963, IT, *Jacob and Esau*) and *Giacobbe, l'uomo che lotto con Dio* (dir. Marcello Baldi, 1963, IT, *Jacob, The Man Who Fought with God*). Symptomatic of interest in stilted drama rather than setting accuracy is the culminating moment of Baldi's film: Esau, intercepting Jacob's return to Canaan, is on horseback and carries a long sword; the brothers' ultimate embrace provokes cheers from the crowds of their respective followers.

Peter Hall's 1994 TV movie, *Jacob* (CZ/FR/UK/IT/DE/US/NL), offers a number of details not found in the biblical account, such as Jacob's healing touch; or the idea that, on his way to Haran, he is robbed by Esau's Canaanite brother-in-law of the gifts intended for Laban; or the presence of a fortune-teller who predicts to Laban imminent good fortune just prior to Jacob's arrival.

By contrast, Israeli filmmaker Moshe Mizrahi's 1975 *Rachel's Man* (the characters speak English) places most of its emphasis on the love story between Jacob and Rachel and less on the hate story between Jacob and Esau. While Greek Cypriot filmmaker Mihalis Kakogiannis' 1974 *Story of Jacob and Joseph* explicitly links those two narratives (see "Joseph [Son of Jacob]"), a second Israeli production from 1979, *Isaac, Jacob and Esau* (dir. unknown; with an added narration in English and in other languages; all of the character dialogue is in Hebrew), begins with the finding of a wife for Isaac. Noteworthy divergences from what one might expect include the stylization of Jacob's first dream, where vaguely glowing figures offer no hint of a ladder, and, in the narration, reference – after the brothers' reconciliation, followed by Rachel's death – to Bethlehem as the future birthplace of Jesus (introducing an explicitly Christian element to the story), and also to Israel as the name of the modern Jewish state.

More recently, the 2009 Arabic-language production, *Ishaq waYa'aqub* (dir. Victor Kamar, *Isaac and Jacob*), which was completed just after the death of its director, also begins with Eliezer's search for a wife for Isaac. It includes the death of Abraham and his burial by Isaac and Ishmael; adds ongoing intervention by Eliezer in the Jacob-and-Esau narrative, names for Esau's Canaanite wives, together with Isaac being healed of his blindness and Esau smashing his wives' idols before leaving to find a more suitable wife from among his Uncle Ishmael's people; and ends with Jacob arriving in Haran, where, the narrator explains, he was welcomed by Laban and his name was changed to Israel – misrepresenting the timing of that biographical detail.

Among the most interesting Jacob and Esau films is the 1999 *La genèse* (*Genesis*), by Malian director Cheick Oumar Sissoko. The characters are African (the language spoken by the protagonists is Bambara), in a narrative that picks up the Jacob-

Esau relationship after the disappearance of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph and interweaves an account of Esau and his desert hunters, hunting for Jacob to avenge himself, with Jacob's unhappy hunt for Joseph (whose death he has not accepted).

The narrative centers on the rape of Dina and its aftermath (that in Genesis takes place *after* the account of Jacob and Esau and their culminating reconciliation), presenting her as going slightly mad after her brothers' massacre of all the males in her rapist-husband's clan (except her father-in-law, Hamor) – and placing her at Esau's side at the end of the film. That end comes after Jacob's wrestling match, depicted by an earthquake-like storm in which he is crowded by dozens of children dressed in white garments. His sons and Hamor seek him out at dawn, asleep in the wilderness after his experience.

Esau (and Dina) sit nearby, watching Jacob – Esau has finally found his brother but, rather than trying to kill him, speaks admiringly of his brother who has been "strong against God" (and against whom it would be futile to fight). It is he who advises Jacob to send his sons to Egypt, to find food during the drought that is consuming Canaan, where there is a great leader who, Dina asserts, will weep when he sees Jacob's sons and load them down with grain. Thus the implied reconciliation between Jacob and Esau leads directly toward the resolution of the Joseph-and-his-brothers drama.

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See also →Esau; →Jacob (Patriarch)