

## THE BLESSING OF ISAAC ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS AND JUBILEES<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The account of Isaac's last blessing and its sequels in Gen 27,1-28,9 poses a variety of questions and problems for readers. There is, first of all, the unedifying impression left by its story of parental favoritism, sibling rivalry, duplicity, and intended fratricide. What too —a reader has to wonder— is the role/stance of the Deity vis-à-vis all this? In addition, the story features a variety of apparent duplications, most notably the double blessing of Jacob by Isaac (27,27-29 and 28,3-4),<sup>2</sup> as well as assorted «gaps» regarding the motivation for and sense of characters' actions. In this paper I wish to examine how two ancient retellings of the biblical story, i.e. Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 1.267-278a<sup>3</sup> and *Jubilees* (hereafter *Jub.*) 26.1-27:12(13-18)<sup>4</sup> deal with such problematic dimensions of the

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1. This article is a revision of a lecture delivered during the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, held in Rome, June 30-July 4, 2009. It is an honor for me to have been invited to contribute to the *Festschrift* for Prof. Rius-Camps.

2. These duplications have often given rise to theories about the text being a composite of J (Gen 27,1-45) and P (Gen 27,46-28,9) material. See, e.g. S. R. DRIVER, *The Book of Genesis* (Westminster Commentaries), London<sup>15</sup>1948, 255, 262.

3. For the text and translation of *Ant.* 1.267-277, I use H. ST. JOHN THACKERAY, *Josephus IV* (LCL), Cambridge, MA- London 1930, 130-135. I have likewise consulted the Greek text of the passage in E. NODET, *Flavius Josèphe I: Les Antiquités Juives Livres I à III*, Paris 1990, 44-66 and the translation of and notes on this in *idem*, *Flavius Josèphe II: Les Antiquités Juives Livres I à III: traduction et notes*, Paris, 1990, 58-59 as well as the annotated translation of L. H. FELDMAN, *Flavius Josephus Judean Antiquities 1-4* (Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary 4), Leiden, 2000, 104-109. On the passage, see further the remarks of T. W. FRANXMAN, *Genesis and the «Jewish Antiquities» of Flavius Josephus* (BibOr 35), Rome 1970, 181-185.

4. For the translation of *Jub.* 26.1-27.12(18), I use O. S. WINTERMUTE, «Jubilees», in *OTP* 2, New York, 1983, 106-108. I have likewise consulted the translation of the passage by R. H. CHARLES (revised by C. RABIN) in H. F. D. SPARKS, ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, Oxford,

source text in their respective handlings of it. After comparing Josephus and *Jubilees* with Genesis 27 (as represented by MT, LXX and the targums) separately, I shall conclude with a comparison of the two rewritings themselves.

To facilitate my intended comparison, I break down the biblical narrative into five main segments, each of which may be distinguished in our two rewritings as well. These are: (1) 27,1-4 (*Ant.*, 1.267-268// *Jub.*, 26.1-2: Isaac's instructions to Esau); (2) 27,5-17 (*Ant.*, 1.269-270// *Jub.*, 26.3-12: Rebekah's intervention); (3) 27,18-29 (*Ant.*, 1.271-273// *Jub.*, 26.13-24: Isaac blesses Jacob); (4) 27,30-40 (*Ant.*, 1.274-275// *Jub.*, 26.25-34: Jacob-Esau exchange); and 27,41-28,9 (*Ant.*, 1.276-277// *Jub.*, 26.35-27.12 [13-18]: circumstances surrounding Jacob's departure for the east).

## 2. JOSEPHUS

In *Ant.*, 1.267-268 Josephus reproduces the biblical Isaac's instructions to Esau and the circumstances giving rise to this of Gen 27,1-4 fairly closely. At the same time, he does omit the initial exchange between them of 27,1b («and he said to him "my son"; and he answered "here I am"»). Conversely, he expands the father's subsequent words with formulations that highlight both Isaac's incapacitated state «... after speaking of his old age, *how, apart from his affliction in the loss of his vision, his years hindered him from ministering to God...*»,<sup>5</sup> 1.267b), but also his firm intention of nevertheless obtaining God's benefactions for Esau («... he wished before that time to procure God's protection for him by his prayers on his behalf», 1.268 *in fine*).

Josephus dramatically compresses the whole Genesis sequence 27,5-17 where Rebekah takes the initiative in dispatching Jacob to Isaac during Esau's absence. Thus, from the opening segment of this sequence, vv. 5-10, featuring the mother's instructions to her son, he takes over (1.269ab) only the notice on Esau's exit (27,5b) and Rebekah's words about procuring the kids and the meal that is to be prepared with these (27,9b).<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, this diminution of Rebekah's

1987, 82-86. On the passage, see also the remarks of J. C. ENDRES, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (CBQMS 18), Washington, D.C. 1987, 83-97.

5. Here and elsewhere in my reproduction of the text of Josephus (and *Jubilees*), I italicize those elements that lack a direct parallel in Genesis 27. On the import of Isaac's reference to his being «hindered» by age from «ministering to God», THACKERAY, *ad loc.*, suggests: «he could not procure a sacrifice himself: such seems to be the meaning»; FRANXMAN, *Genesis*, 181-182 and n. 11 tentatively agrees. In fact, however, Esau is not being asked to obtain a sacrificial victim for his father, but rather game that the latter will eat. H. SCHRECKENBERG, «Einige Vermutungen zum Josephustext», *Theokratia* 1 (1972) 64-75, 65-66 conjectures Θηρεύειν («to hunt») for the codices' θεραπεύειν τὸν θεόν.

6. In Gen 27,9b Rebekah states that she will prepare the meal once Jacob brings her the kids. Josephus' wording ascribes —here and elsewhere— a more active role to Jacob and conversely

speaking role<sup>7</sup> goes together with an inserted editorial notice in 1.269a concerning the motivation behind her initiative, i.e. «... *being determined to invoke God's favour upon Jacob, even in defiance of Isaac's intent.*»<sup>8</sup> Via this insertion Josephus highlights both the purposefulness of Rebekah's initiative and the divergence of intention between the two parents. Thereafter, Josephus leaves aside—for the moment, but see below—the son-mother exchange of 27,11-13 in which Jacob alludes (v. 12b) to the possibility of his ending up being «cursed» by his father for his attempted deception (vv. 11-12a), whereupon Rebekah assures him that any such paternal curse will befall her and reiterates her directive to him (v. 13; cf. v. 9). The segment 27,5-17 concludes in vv. 14-17 with a focus on Rebekah and her preparing her son for his encounter with his father. Josephus (1.269c-270) not only omits certain of these preparatory measures (e.g., the clothing of Jacob with Esau's best clothes [v. 15]<sup>9</sup> and the covering of his neck with the skins [v. 16b]), but also shifts the focus from mother to son. In particular, he interjects a generalized summary notice at the start of 1.270 («And Jacob obeyed his mother, taking all his instructions for her»),<sup>10</sup> has Jacob cover his own «arm» with the skin (com-

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a more diminished one to Rebekah. In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 27,10* Rebekah specifies that of the two kids that Jacob is to bring her, «one [is] for the Passover and one for the festival offerings» (the translation is that of M. MAHER, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* [The Aramaic Bible 1B], Collegeville, MN, 1992, p. 95). This specification, in turn, harks back to the targum's rendering of Gen 27,1 where Isaac's summoning of Esau takes place on the 14th of Nisan, i.e. the day on the evening of which Passover was celebrated (for this dating of Isaac's blessing, see also *Pesiq. Rab. 15.5; Pesiq. R. El. 32.4*).

7. From the sequence of Gen 27,5-10, Josephus leaves aside the notice on Rebekah's «listening» to Isaac's words to Jacob in v. 5a as well as her reporting those words to Jacob in vv. 6-7 (together with her command that he «obey» her of v. 8). Via this omission Josephus eliminates the questionable biblical portrayal of Rebekah as a «snoop» (in *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 27,5* her «hearing» is attributed to the «Holy Spirit,» while *Zohar 1.142a* ascribes it to the Shekinah). At the same time, he leaves Rebekah's knowledge of the (private) conversation between Isaac and Esau unaccounted for.

8. The above indication concerning Rebekah's intention might be seen as Josephus' adaption of her concluding word to Jacob in Gen 27,10b where she tells him that he is to bring what she has prepared to Isaac «so that he may bless you before he dies.» Regarding Rebekah's motivation in dispatching Jacob to Isaac, *Gen. Rab. 65.6* affirms that she did this, not because she loved Jacob more than Esau, but rather to keep Isaac from doing what is called an «abomination» in Prov 17,15, i.e. «justifying the wicked»—as he would have done by blessing the renegade Esau.

9. In *Tg.Ps.-J. Gen 27,15* these clothes are said to have belonged «to the first man» and that on this occasion Esau had not donned them to go hunting but had left them in the house with Rebekah. Expatiating on the matter, *Zohar 1.142b* avers that Esau had obtained the garments by killing their earlier possessor Nimrud, the mighty hunter (see Gen 10,9) and generally wore them whenever he went hunting, his failure to do so in this instance causing the delay in his return. On the transmission of the garments from Adam to Esau, see further *Tanh. B. 6.10*, which states that Esau entrusted the garments to his mother after observing his wives (cf. Gen 26,34) «serving idols» (this source further calls the garments those «of the high priesthood» in which the succession of first born beginning with Adam officiated before God).

10. In Gen 27,8 and 13b (neither of which is reproduced by Josephus), Rebekah twice calls on Jacob to «obey my word.» In Josephus, Jacob actually does «obey» his mother, even without having to be enjoined to do so.

pare 27,16a, where Rebekah covers Jacob's «hands»), appends a biblically-unparalleled motivation for this action (i.e. in order to convince Isaac that he is the hairy Esau), and further expands with an interjected allusion to Jacob's «fear» about being «cursed» by his father<sup>11</sup> inspired by 27,11 (where Jacob voices this concern to Rebekah), earlier passed over by him.

The long central segment of the biblical narrative, 27,18-29, proceeds through a series of exchanges between Isaac and Jacob (vv. 18-26) to the former's blessing of the latter in vv. 27-29. Josephus (1.271) reduces the pair's multiple exchanges to a single one, itself based on 27,21b-22. In his version of this sequence, Isaac's summoning of Jacob to approach him (v. 21b)<sup>12</sup> is (extra-biblically) motivated by the father's «detecting him by the peculiarity of his voice), whereupon Jacob «extends the arm which he [see 1.270] had wrapped in the goatskin) (compare 27,22a where Jacob simply «goes near» his father who «feels» him), and Isaac declares the voice to be Jacob's, but the «thick hair» (27,22b: «hands») to be Esau's. In confining himself to this component of 27,18-26, Josephus jettisons all that immediately precedes and follows in the source, i.e. the opening exchange of vv. 18-21 (where Jacob fraudulently claims to be Esau [v. 19] and asserts that «the Lord your God»<sup>13</sup> has «given me success» in the hunt [v. 21], the notice on Isaac's «not recognizing» Jacob and blessing him (v. 23), and the reiterated question and answer about Jacob's identity with Jacob once again declaring himself to be Esau (v. 24; cf. vv. 18b-19a). He likewise abridges the complex of notices (27,25-26) on Isaac's eating the food brought him,<sup>14</sup> kissing Jacob, smelling his garments and blessing him that serve as a lead-in to Isaac's words of blessing in 27,27-29. In 1. 272a the former sequence is reduced to the transitional phrase «So, *suspecting no fraud* (κακκοῦργον)<sup>15</sup> he supped, and then turned to prayer and

11. In his rendering of 27,11-22 in 1.270b, Josephus notably has Jacob acknowledge the «guile» (κατουργῶν) involved in his (projected) dealings with his father, thus anticipating Isaac's attribution of «guile» (LXX δόλου) to him in Gen 27,35. See n. 15.

12. According to *B.* 6.15 (see also *Gen. Rab.* 65.19), Jacob was so non-pulsed by his father's summons, that «his body trembled, and he hung back like wax». Thereupon, God directed the angels Gabriel and Michael to support him in his approach and further addressed him directly with the encouraging words of Isa 41,10 («fear not, for I am with you...»).

13. According to *B.* 6.10 and *Gen. Rab.* 55.19, Jacob's use of this phrase prompted Isaac to declare «this is not Esau», given that Esau never mentioned the Lord.

14. In Gen 27,25b there is a mention of Jacob's bringing his father «wine,» that appears unexpectedly at this juncture, given that the notice on the supplies Rebekah provides to Jacob in 27,17 does not refer to wine. *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 27,25 addresses the problem by having an angel provide Jacob with wine «that had been stored up in the grapes since the beginning of the world» at the moment of his approaching Isaac to serve him his meal; compare *B.* 6.16, where the angel is identified as Michael and the wine he brings is said to come from the Garden of Eden.

15. This noun echoes the cognate participle used in 1.270 where Jacob is said to be «fearful lest before the benedictions his guile (κακκοῦργῶν) be discovered...» The wordplay highlights

invocation of God...», in which the mention of Isaac's lack of suspicion is a Josephan insertion.

As for Josephus' rendering of Isaac's blessing (Gen 27,27-29) in 1.272b-273a, commentators have highlighted its marked divergence from the source passage. That divergence concerns, first of all, the two texts' mode of formulation (Genesis's jussives and poetic imagery become a direct address to God employing a more abstract and generalized wording). The divergence also affects their respective contents: in Genesis Isaac asks that his son be endowed with agricultural fertility [vv. 27-28] and domination over both the peoples generally<sup>16</sup> and his relatives in particular [v. 29]; Josephus has him, after an elaborate opening address («Lord of all ages and creator of universal being») remind God of his past promises (perhaps under the influence of Isaac's second blessing of Jacob in Gen 28,3-4), ask that God not «scorn his present infirmity» (compare Isaac's statement about being «hindered from ministering to God» in 1.267), and finally appeal to God to protect and prosper his son, likewise making him «a terror to his foes, to his friends a treasure and a delight».<sup>17</sup>

Josephus' characteristic compression of the content of Genesis 27 continues in his handling of the chapter's next main segment, vv. 30-40 (the Isaac-Esau exchange), in 1.274-275. In 1.274a, he does expand the reference in 27,30 to the (near) simultaneity of Jacob's departure from Isaac and Esau's entry to him with the transitional phrase («Thus did he invoke God, believing that he was offering these prayers for Esau...») that highlights the ironic contrast between what Isaac, «suspecting no fraud» (1.272), had intended to do and what he has actually just done.<sup>18</sup> Thereafter, however, he passes over the initial exchange between Isaac and Esau reported in 27,31-32 concerning the latter's identity. He likewise modifies the biblical notice on Isaac's response (v. 33) to Esau's identification

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the contrasting states of minds of the two men: Jacob is aware that he is about to act «with guile» towards his father, while the latter has no inkling of the guile animating the figure standing before him. See n. 11.

16. *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 27,29 has Isaac spell out the identity of the «nations» and the «peoples» he calls for «Esau» to dominate, the former being «all the sons of Esau,» the latter «all the sons of Keturah».

17. Compare the concluding words of Gen 27,29 («cursed be every one who curses you [*Tg. Ps.-J.* + like Balaam the son of Beor] and blessed every one who blesses you [*Tg. Ps.-J.* + like Moses the prophet, the scribe of Israel]») For a detailed analysis of Jacob's prayer in *Ant.* 1.272b-273a, in light both of Josephus' corpus as a whole and Greek literature generally, see T. JONQUIÈRE, *Prayer in Josephus*, Dissertation Utrecht, 2005, 53-62.

18. *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 27,31 prefaces the MT's reference to the returned Esau's preparing food for his father with the parenthetical notice «Now, the Memra of the Lord withhold clean game from him; but he found a dog and killed him» (the implication being that he was ready to feed this unclean animal to his father). Compare *B.* 6.10, 17 and *Gen. Rab.* 67.2, which attribute Esau's delay in returning to the fact that whenever he caught a deer, an angel would release this, thus giving Jacob time to approach his father.

of himself in v. 32b (not reproduced by him), i.e. his «trembling violently»<sup>19</sup> and his question about whom he has just blessed.<sup>20</sup> In place thereof, he simply has (1.274b) Isaac «perceiving his error» once Esau shows up and «holding his peace,» this reaction recalling Isaac's keeping silent regarding Esau's marriages notwithstanding his disapproval of these in 1.266, Josephus' elaboration of the notice on Esau's (initial) marriages in Gen 26,34.

Gen 27,34-38 reports Esau's repeated, emotionally-charged attempts to elicit a blessing for himself from his father, notwithstanding Isaac's demurrals, with both father and son evoking Jacob's fraud in vv. 35-36a. Leaving aside this last element with its negative characterization of Jacob,<sup>21</sup> Josephus (1.275a) reduces the remainder of the sequence to a three-part notice in which Esau's emotional outburst (cited twice in 27,34a.38b) is reserved till the end: «but Esau desired to obtain from his father the same benediction as his brother [see 27,34b], and when his father<sup>22</sup> refused because he had exhausted his prayers on Jacob [see 27,37], loudly lamented his disappointment [see 27,38b].»

The scene between Isaac and his first-born climaxes in 27,39-40 with the former finally blessing the latter. After an inserted allusion, perhaps inspired by the LXX plus in Gen 27,38b that refers to Isaac's being «cut to the quick,» to the effect of Esau's lament upon his father («moved by his tears...»),<sup>23</sup> the historian cites (1.275b) the patriarch's words concerning him in indirect discourse that he

19. In, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 55.2; 57.2; *Tg. Ps.J.* Gen 27.33; *Zohar* 1.143a B. 6.22 Isaac's «violent trembling» is attributed to Esau's entry being accompanied by «(the smell of) Gehenna.» *Zohar* 1.144b invokes the «measure for measure» principle in stating that just as Jacob was responsible for his father's «consternation» once Esau appears before him, a like consternation befell Jacob when his sons informed him of the (purported) death of his beloved Joseph (see Gen 37,32).

20. In *B.* 6.23, it is stated that the «Holy Spirit» answered Isaac's question for him, telling him it was Jacob. *Tg. Neof.* Gen 27,33 appends to Jacob's closing declaration in MT 27,33 («and he [Jacob] will be blessed») a reference to a *Bath Qol* that issued forth from the heavens at this moment, affirming that Jacob would indeed be blessed.

21. Recall, however, that Josephus has previously employed the language of «guile» and «fraud» in relation to Jacob's deed in 1.270 (see n. 11) and 1.272 (see n. 15). In *Gen. Rab.* 67.4 Isaac's reference to Jacob's «coming with guile» (במרמה) is interpreted *in bonam partem* by R. Johanan as «in the wisdom of his Torah».

22. THACKERAY, *ad loc.* prints the underlying Greek word, i.e. πατήρ, within brackets, noting that the word is absent from codex O and the Latin translation. NODET, *ad loc.* reads the word without brackets.

23. Philo (*QG* 4.233), by contrast, declares: «It was not pity that aroused the invoker of blessings, but the belief in (the other's) repentance (and turning) towards the better [i.e. as evidenced by Esau's previous lament].» According to *B.* 6.24, God himself was so affected by Esau's weeping (Gen 27,34) that he declared «Look, the wicked one is weeping over his life! How am I to turn him away empty?» and forthwith directs Isaac to bless him. Note also *Gen. Rab.* 67.5, where an imaginary exchange between God and Isaac is reported in which the latter's desire to bless Esau is resisted by the former with reference to the crimes Esau will commit, the upshot being that Isaac finally asks God to grant Esau earthly prosperity, even while denying him the vision of the Messiah's time.



substitutes for Genesis' direct address. Likewise the content of the father's blessing is quite distinct from its biblical prototype, their only obviously shared element being the announcement that Esau will «serve» his brother (see 27,40αβ).<sup>24</sup> For the rest, Josephus omits both the (grammatically ambiguous) allusions to the (non-) fertility of Esau's future dwelling in 27,39 and the declaration that he will eventually win his freedom from Jacob's «yoke» (27,40bβ).<sup>25</sup> In place of these biblical components of the paternal blessing, Josephus focuses on Gen 27,40αα's reference to Esau's living by the sword, turning this into the following pronouncement concerning not only Esau himself but also his descendants: «... *he would be renowned in the chase and for strength of body in arms and in labours of all kinds, and he and his posterity would thence reap an age-long reputation...*».

The concluding segment of the biblical account of Isaac's blessing, Gen 27,41-28,5 placed Josephus —and subsequent exegetes— before particular problems in that it seems to duplicate Isaac's earlier blessing of Jacob and leaves unclear which parent was the one responsible for Jacob's departure from the household. Josephus, in 1.276-277, deals with these problems by markedly abridging the entire passage. Specifically, he begins in 1.276 by inserting a reference to Jacob's «terror of his brother» and making summary allusion to the content of 27,41 concerning Esau's plans to kill Jacob once their father dies<sup>26</sup> as the reason for that terror. In the sequence of 27,42-28,5, Rebekah addresses herself in turn to Jacob (vv. 42-45) and to Isaac (v. 46), who then himself speaks to Jacob with words of both command and blessing (28,1-4) that result in Jacob's leaving for his relatives in the east (28,5). In Josephus' presentation, this entire series of events gets reduced to the notice (1.276b): «...(Jacob) was rescued by his mother, who persuaded her husband to take a wife from his kinsfolk in Mesopotamia»<sup>27</sup> that cites neither parent's actual address to Jacob, but does highlight Rebekah's initiative in her son's move.

In conformity with Gen 28,6-9, *Ant.* 1.277 shifts attention back to the family's remaining member, Esau, and his marital situation. In the biblical passage

24. Concerning this element of Isaac's blessing of Esau, Philo (*Congr.* 175-176) comments that in the case of a foolish, impetuous person like Esau, the seeming evil of his being «enslaved» to the rational orders Jacob would give him was in fact a great blessing. Cf. the similar remarks in *Prob.* 57; *Virt.* 209; *QG* 4.236. According to *Tg. Neof.* Gen 27,40, Jacob's descendants will subjugate Esau «when they study the Law and keep the commandments.» See n. 25.

25. According to *Tg. Neof.* Gen 27,40 (and *Gen. Rab.* 67.7), Esau's «liberation» will come at the time Jacob's descendants «abandon the commandments and withhold themselves from studying the Law» —a development which would also lead to Esau's «ruling over» Jacob's line. See n. 24.

26. *Mid. Pss.* 14.2 (cf. also *Gen. Rab.* 67.8) elaborates on Esau's plans as cited in Gen 27,41, having him plot to have Ishmael kill Isaac, while he himself slays Jacob. Once this happens, Esau further plans, he will kill Ishmael and so gain possession of the whole world.

27. In MT Gen 28,1-9, Jacob's destination is called «Paddan-aram.» Josephus' designation («Mesopotamia») follows LXX's place name.

Esau's marrying of «Mahalath», daughter of Ishmael (28,9) comes in response to his observing his father's «blessing» of and command to Jacob and the latter's acting in obedience to both parents as well as his further noting his father's displeasure with the Canaanite wives he had previously married (28,6-8; see 26,34). Josephus, by contrast, speaks of Esau's having «already» prior to this time married «Basemath» (a name drawn by him from Gen 36,3) once he becomes aware that both his parents (cf. 26,34; 27,46 and 28,8) are ill-disposed towards his earlier Canaanite wives (see *Ant.*, 1.265-266). In this presentation, Esau «catches on» about his parents' feelings at an earlier point, and acts to mollify them on his own, without having to be prompted to do so by his father and brother's moves. That more positive depiction of Esau is further reinforced by the historian's appended notice about Esau's being «deeply devoted» to Basemath, the wife his parents would have found more palatable.<sup>28</sup>

Following this Esau-focused «parenthesis», *Ant.*, 1.278a («Jacob then was sent by his mother to Mesopotamia to espouse the daughter of her brother Laban [in Gen 28,2 Isaac gives the equivalent command to Jacob], Isaac consenting to the marriage in compliance with this wife's wishes») reiterates 1.276b's portrayal of Rebekah as the active party in Jacob's departure.

### 3. JUBILEES

In its rendering of the first four of the component segments of Gen 27,1-28,9 (see above), *Jub.* 26.1-27.12(13-18)<sup>29</sup> follows the biblical account very closely, so closely in fact that we can focus our examination on its occasional deviations from the source presentation. Thus, in its version of Gen 27,1-4, *Jub.*, 26.1-2 substitutes one of its characteristic calendrical notices («and in the seventh year of this week») for 27,1a's mention of Isaac's age and blindness. To Rebekah's opening words to Jacob of Gen 27,6-10 that introduce the segment Gen 27,5-17, *Jub.*, 26.6 (*in fine*) appends the assurance «and you (Jacob) will be blessed».

28. Compare Philo's (*QG* 4.245) more negative reading of Esau's initiative as reported in Gen 28,6-9. Thus, whereas Jacob obeyed both his parents (Gen 28,7), Esau (see 28,8) is concerned only with placating his father, ignoring his mother's feelings. Moreover, Gen 28,9 indicates that in taking a new wife, Esau retained his earlier, objectionable ones, «thus adding sin to sin and not being absolved of the former ones» (a similar assertion is attributed to R. Leazar in *Gen. Rab.* 67.13). In contrast, *y. Bik.* 3.3 (cf. also the opinion of R. Levi as cited in *Gen. Rab.* 67.13) declares that the real name of Esau's third wife was «Basemath» (so Gen 36,3) and that she is given the surname «Mahalath» (from the root *mhl*) in Gen 28,9 only to signify that his earlier offenses had been forgiven.

29. The full text of *Jub.* 26.1-27.18 is extant only in Ethiopic. Portions of the Latin text of 26.8-23\* and 27.11-24 are preserved; see H. RONSCH, *Das Buch der Jubiläen oder die Kleine Genesis*, Leipzig, 1874, 44-47. Frg. 2 of the Hebrew *Jubilees* manuscript 4Q222 yielded a (partial) text of *Jub.* 27.6-7; see H. ATTRIDGE *et al.* (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4 VIII. Parabiblical Texts, Part I* (DJD XIII), Oxford 1994, 92-93.



*Jub.*, 26.7-8 is notably more expansive than Gen 27,11-12 in its citation of Jacob's reply to his mother, having him begin by affirming both his devotion to his father, but also his «fear» that Isaac might recognize his voice and wish to touch him (as in fact happens in Gen 27,31). Thereafter, it interjects a mention by Jacob of Isaac's «becoming angry with» him into its version of the «cursing scenario» that Jacob lays out for Rebekah in Gen 27,12.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, *Jub.* 26.10 prefaces the notice of Gen 27,14a on Jacob's bringing the things she had told him with mention of his «obeying» Rebekah (as she calls upon him to do in 27,13b).

*Jubilees'* parallel to Gen 27,18-29, the exchange(s) between Isaac and Jacob, is 26.13-24. Here the following distinctive features of its rewriting are of note. Jacob's opening declaration to his father is not the clearly duplicitous «I am Esau your firstborn» (so 27,19), but merely ambiguous: «I am your son» (26.13).<sup>31</sup> Into the notice of 27,23 about Isaac's failing to recognize Jacob's identity due to the Esau-like hairiness of his hands, *Jub.*, 26.18b inserts the noteworthy «theological» explanation that Isaac did not know him «because the change was from heaven in order to distract his mind.» *Jubilees* modifies as well Jacob's lying response to Isaac's further question about whether he is really Esau, i.e. «I am» in 27,24, turning this (26.19) into a declaration («I am your son») that avoids both lying and answering his father's question.

In its rendition of the words of Isaac's blessing from Gen 27,27-29, *Jub.*, 26.23-24 introduces a variety of changes: God is asked not only to give but also to «multiply» for him the goods of both heaven and earth, both of which are designated as «dew» in contrast to 27,28a where the reference is to «the fatness of the earth». Jacob/Esau is further wished, not copious «grain and wine» (so 27,28b), but rather «wheat and oil».<sup>32</sup> Most notably, *Jub.*, 26.24 inserts into the series of blessings dealing with Jacob/Esau's relationship with other peoples (27,29) the wish —perhaps inspired by Isaac's words to Jacob in Gen 28,4— «may all of the blessings with which the Lord blessed me and blessed Abraham, my father, belong to you and to your seed forever».

30. With *Jubilees'* elaboration of Jacob's answer to Rebekah highlighting the problematic nature of what she is telling him to do, compare the question attributed to him in *Tanh. B.* 6.19: «Do you [Rebekah] know that anyone who makes fun of his father is as guilty as if he were serving idols?». Cf. also *Gen. Rab.* 65.15, which has Jacob bringing his mother the items of Gen 27,14 «under constraint, bowed down, and weeping.»

31. Compare Philo (*QG* 4.206) who offers a long apologia for Jacob's response in Gen 27,19, paralleling his answer there to the legitimate deceptions perpetrated by spies, generals and kings for the benefit of their people and who further avers that in claiming to be Esau Jacob was acknowledging the presence of Esau-like traits within himself. Cf. also *B.* 6.10 that, with reference to Jacob's answer, declares: «Even though you may say Jacob lied, he did not lie» and then construes his response as follows: «I am Jacob. Esau [is] your first-born son».

32. In *Tg. Neof.* Gen 27,28, Isaac asks the Lord to give Jacob, not only «grain and wine» (so MT), but also «oil».

Also in the case of the Isaac–Esau exchanges of Gen 27,30-40, *Jubilees* (26.25-34) continues to follow its source quite closely. In its parallel to the notice on Jacob's departing as Esau arrives (Gen 27,30), it does (26.25), however, interject a notice («he hid himself») on the former's response to the latter's approach. In addition, *Jub.*, 26.27 amplifies Esau's identification of himself in Gen 27,32b with the statement, echoing Jacob's earlier words in 27,19// 26.13, «I have done as you commanded me.»

In line with its amplification of Isaac's words of blessing in 26.24 («may all the blessings... belong to you and your seed forever»), *Jub.*, 26.29 extends and intensifies the patriarch's concluding word of Gen 27,33 («and he shall be blessed»), rendering this «and he *and all his seed* will be blessed *forever*.» Subsequently, again in accordance with its reworking of Isaac's earlier blessing, *Jub.*, 26.31 has him cite his conferral, not only of wheat and wine (so Gen 27,37), but also of oil on Jacob.

*Jub.*, 26.33b-34's version of Isaac's eventual blessing of Esau evidences various modifications of Gen 27,39b-40: the former's invocation of the «fatness of the earth» becomes «the dew of the land» (compare on 26.23 above); the phrase «when you break loose» (27,40α) is rendered «when you become great», and the closing announcement of 27,40bβ («you shall break his yoke from your neck») is amplified with the following word of doom for Esau and his descendants: «... that then you will surely sin completely unto death, and your seed will be rooted out from under heaven.»

As noted initially, it is only with the final segment (27,41-28,9) of its source text that *Jubilees* (26.35-27.12[13-18]) begins displaying large-scale distinctives. Already in its parallel to Gen 27,41, *Jub.*, 26.35 substitutes mention of Esau's continual «threatening» of Jacob for MT's biblical reference to his «hating him» (LXX: «was indignant at»). Thereafter, *Jub.*, 27.1 suggests a «supernatural» involvement in Rebekah's «hearing» (so Gen 27,42) Esau's words with its inserted specification that those words were told her «in a dream» (compare *Tg. Ps.-J. ad loc.*: «by the Holy Spirit»).<sup>33</sup> In Gen 27,42-45, the absence of any response by Jacob to Rebekah's words to him is notable. *Jub.*, 27.4-7 fills this source gap. It does so initially by inserting a first reply by Jacob between the two parts of Rebekah's discourse, vv. 42-45a and v. 45b, in which Jacob boldly declares: «I am not afraid. If he [Esau] desires to kill me, I shall kill him.» Thereafter, having reproduced (27.5) Rebekah's rhetorical question of v. 45b («Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?») as her response to this declaration, *Jubilees*, in 27.6, provides Jacob with a further reply to his mother.

33. On God's involvement with Rebekah's initiatives in Genesis 27, see also *B.* 6.19, which asserts that the matriarch's «plan» in dispatching Jacob to Isaac, «was not from Rebekah. Rather the Holy one had put it in her heart.» See also *Gen. Rab.* 67.9, where in response to the question of who «told» (so Gen 27,42) Rebekah of Esau's plans, R. Haggai avers that, like the other matriarchs, Rebekah was a «prophet,» i.e. and so was informed of the matter by God.

Here, echoing his earlier words to her (26.7), Jacob affirms his solicitude for his father who, distraught over his leaving him, would become angry and curse him. Accordingly, Jacob concludes his response by declaring «I will not go. But when he [Isaac] sends for me, only then will I go.» To this response, Rebekah, in *Jubilees* replies with a last, biblically unparalleled word of her own («I will go in and I will speak to him. And he will send you»). This conclusion to the Rebekah-Jacob exchange, in turn, provides a lead-in to Rebekah's address to Isaac that in Gen 27,46 abruptly follows on her words to Jacob (27,42-45). *Jubilees'* rendering (27.8) of Rebekah's complaint to Isaac about Esau's «Hittite wives» in Gen 27,46 further smooths the transition from what precedes by inserting mention of her «entering» to her husband, just as it accentuates her denunciation of Esau's wives via her appended closing assertion that «the daughters of Canaan» — a phrase likely derived from the references in Gen 28,1-9 to «the Canaanite women» — «are evil».

In 27.9-11 *Jubilees* reproduces Isaac's words to Jacob quite faithfully, only adding the formulaic «Go, my son, in peace.» to the end of these and replacing the geographical designation «Paddan-aram» of (MT) Gen 28,3 with the more familiar «Mesopotamia» used also by the LXX. *Jub.*, 27.12 makes that same substitution in its rendering of the notice of Gen 28,5 on Jacob's departure for the east in accordance with his father's directives, likewise omitting the source's closing reference to Rebekah as mother, not only of Jacob, but also of Esau.

*Jubilees'* tendency to denigrate Esau also manifests itself in its *Sondergut* appendix (27.13-18) to its (largely verbatim) rendition of Gen 27,1-28,5. That appendix takes the place of Gen 28,6-9 which, as we have seen, tells of Esau's attempt to placate his parents' displeasure at his previous marriages, by marrying a woman, the daughter of Ishmael, who would presumably prove more acceptable to them. In *Jub.*, 27.13-18 one hears nothing of such a positive initiative by their elder son.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the passage features a scene, likely inspired, as John Endres has pointed out,<sup>35</sup> by the account of Tobit's comforting Anna after the departure of their son Tobias for Media in Tob 5,17-21, in which Isaac consoles the grieving Rebekah distraught over Jacob's absence. The scene concludes, significantly, with the notice that Isaac «blessed» Jacob, this making clear that he stands by his earlier blessing of him, notwithstanding his awareness of the fraudulence by which it was obtained.

#### 4. JOSEPHUS AND JUBILEES COMPARED

As has emerged from the foregoing discussion, Josephus and *Jubilees* do differ markedly in their overall «fidelity» to their Genesis *Vorlage*, with the latter adher-

34. Esau's new marriage is mentioned, in passing, subsequently in *Jub.*, 29.18.

35. ENDRES, *Biblical Interpretation*, 95-97.

ing much more closely to the contents, wording, and direct address usage of the biblical source than does the former. At the same time, we also noted that *Jubilees* itself takes rather considerable liberties with the presentation of Gen 27,41-28,9.

As for more specific similarities and differences between the two rewritings, I would call attention to the following points. Both Josephus (1.270) and *Jubilees* (26.7-8) expatiate on Jacob's response (Gen 27,11-12) to his mother's initiative as cited in Gen 27,5-10. In particular, both have Jacob allude to his «fearing» Isaac's reaction, just as both explicitly mention (1.269 *in fine*; 26.10a) his «obeying» Rebekah. Neither version reproduces Jacob's double fraudulent claim to be Esau in response to his father's direct question (Gen 27,19.24) as such, with Josephus simply omitting both instances of the claim, while *Jub.* (26.13,19) has Jacob finesse the matter in each case.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, in their respective versions of Isaac's blessing on Esau/Jacob of Gen 27,27b-29, Josephus (1.272) and *Jub.* 26.24 represent him as invoking, perhaps under the influence of Gen 28,3-4, God's promises to Abraham upon his son. Finally, in accordance with LXX's rendering, our two rewritings have in common their designation of Jacob's destination as «Mesopotamia» rather than MT's «Paddan-Aram».

Over against the preceding, rather limited commonalities between Josephus and *Jubilees* against Genesis, stand an array of instances where they diverge in their handling of the biblical data —of which I mention only three salient examples here. Firstly, with regard to the figure of Esau, Josephus (1.277), particularly in his reworking of the segment Gen 28,6-9 concerning Esau's new marriage undertaken to placate his parents, seems intent on offering a more sympathetic *Esaubild*.<sup>37</sup> In the case of *Jubilees*, by contrast, as both its complete omission of Gen 28,6-9 and its expansion (26.34 *in fine*) of Jacob's blessing of Esau with an appended announcement of his future «sin unto death» and «the rooting out of his seed» does not share Josephus' tendency in this regard.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, in Josephus (as in Genesis itself) the proceedings unfold without any

36. On Josephus' overall, somewhat diminished portrayal of Jacob, see L. H. FELDMAN, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible*, Berkeley, CA 1998, 304-334. On *Jubilees'* (enhanced) depiction of Jacob, see ENDRES, *Biblical Interpretation*, 214-217.

37. It is controverted whether Josephus' procedure in this regard reflects the equation of «Esau» with Josephus' patron Rome, only definitively attested in later Jewish literature, and the historian's concern not to give offense to his Roman benefactors. E.g., FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, pp. 104-106 affirms this to be the case, while JONQUIÈRE, *Prayer in Josephus*, 52-53 questions the supposition. On Josephus' overall portrayal of «Esau», see R. KRITZER, «Esau bei Philon und Josephus», in G. LANGER (ed.), *Esau Bruder und Feind*, Göttingen 2009, 41-54, 49-54.

38. An anti-Esau tendency pervades *Jubilees* (in *Jub.*, 38.3, Esau ends up being killed by Jacob when, in violation of his earlier promises to his parents, he advances against his brother with hostile intent). Generally, this *Tendenz* of the book is seen as reflecting the conflicts between the Maccabees/Hasmoneans and the Edomites/Idumeans of the second century B.C. (see 1 Macc 5,3-5.65; 2 Macc 10,14-23; *Ant.* 13.257-258) and so as a pointer towards a dating of the book in that period. On the dating of *Jubilees*, see F. SCHUBERT, *Tradition und Erneuerung. Studien zum Jubiläenbuch und seinem Trägerkreis* (EHS III: 771), Frankfurt am Main 1998, 31-34. On

mention of the involvement of a supernatural agency (note, however, the subsequent *Ant.* 2.173, where in his version of God's word to the aged Jacob at Beer-sheba [Gen 46,3-4] Josephus makes the Deity declare, *post factum* «For when thou wast like to be deprived of the principedom by thy father, it was I who gave it to thee»). *Jubilees*, on the other hand, in a fashion paralleled also in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, twice introduces mention of just such an involvement: Isaac's failure to recognize Jacob (Gen 27,23) was due to a heavenly intervention «in order to distract his mind» (26.18), while Rebekah's hearing of Esau's designs against Jacob (Gen 27,42) is the result of a «dream» (27.1). Thirdly, the divergence between Josephus and *Jubilees* in their respective handling of the entire sequence Gen 27,42-28,5 with its problematic movement of thought is also noteworthy. Josephus (1.276,278), here carrying further a tendency visible already in Genesis itself, makes Rebekah the all-dominant, active figure in the process of Jacob's departure, with both Isaac and Jacob simply and silently acquiescing in her proposal. *Jub.*, 27.2-12, on the other hand, not only reproduces (27.9-12) Isaac's speech to Jacob of Gen 28,1-5 enjoining him to leave for the east, but also, without biblical warrant, twice represents Jacob as «talking back» to Rebekah (27.4-7), affirming *inter alia*, that he will only leave if his father tells him to do so.<sup>39</sup>

Additional examples of both similarities and differences in Josephus and *Jubilees*' respective rewritings of Gen 27,1-28:9 could undoubtedly be identified. I hope, however, that those which I have noted do convey a sense of the interest and potential fruitfulness of such comparative study of these two ancient biblical *relectures*, separated though they are by a span of some 250 years.<sup>40</sup>

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*Jubilees*' overall portrayal of Esau, see G. LANGER, «Esau im Buch der Jubiläen», in IDEM, (ed.), *Esau Bruder und Feind*, Göttingen 2009, 55-61.

39. *Jubilees*' option to play down Rebekah's role here vis-à-vis that of her husband and son is particularly noteworthy (and somewhat perplexing), given that elsewhere it gives the matriarch more of a voice than does Genesis itself, attributing to her extended discourses (see *Jub.*, 25.1-3,11-23; 35.1-27) of which the Bible says nothing. See the comment of ENDRES, *Biblical Interpretation*, 217: «The matriarch's fortunes rose faster than those of any other character whom the author portrayed.»

40. *Jubilees* is generally dated somewhere around 150 B.C. (see n. 38). Josephus finished his *Antiquities* in 93/94 A.D.; see *Ant.* 20.267. On the possible use of *Jubilees* by Josephus, see B. HALPERN-AMARU, «Flavius Josephus and *The Book of Jubilees*: A Question of Source», *HUCA* 72 (2001) 15-44.

## Resum

Gn 27,1-28,9 explica, amb un detall poc edificant, les circumstàncies que envolten la partença de Jacob de la seva família després d'haver obtingut fraudulentament, instigat per la seva mare Rebeca, la benedicció paternal dirigida al seu germà Esaú. Aquest estudi analitza com dos antics relats de l'episodi, Flavi Josep *Ant.* 1.266-267 i *Jub.* 26.1-27.12 (13-18), es diferencien de la font textual del Gènesi en els trets més problemàtics. El treball conclou amb la comparació de les dues versions postbíbliques, clarificant tant les semblances (p. e., cap d'ells no reproduïx la doble falsa identificació d'ell mateix com Esaú [vegeu Gen 27,19.24] com a tal) com les diferències (Flavi Josep ofereix una imatge molt més comprensiva d'Esaú, més que no pas la Bíblia; *Jub.* una de més negativa).