

June 23, 2019 | PRIDETIDE
Gender Transgressors:
From Jacob to Joseph,
from Deborah to Eunuchs
and Beyond!

Ancient Readings

Genesis 25:21-34

Isaac prayed to YHWH on behalf of Rebecca for they had no children. God listened to the prayers and Rebecca conceived. The babies in her womb struggled with each other. Rebecca said, "If this is the way it is to be, why go on living?" She asked for divine guidance, and YHWH said to her., "The separation of two peoples has begun, butting heads while still in your body; one shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger."

When the time came for her to deliver, she gave birth to twins. The first to enter the world was red, very ruddy, and had so much hair on his body that he looked as if he were wearing a fur coat. So they named him Esau, "Rough One", "Hairy One". When the second came out, fist clutched tight to the first's heel, they named him Jacob, "Heel", or "Heel Grabber".

The children grew up. Esau became a skilled hunter, an outdoorsman, and enjoyed the open country, while quiet Jacob preferred to stay at home, dwelling among the tents. And Isaac favored Esau, and ate of his game, while Rebecca favored Jacob.

One day, when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from hunting, famished. He said to Jacob, "I'm starving! Let me have some of that red stuff, that red stew." Jacob said, "Not until you sell me the rights you own from being firstborn." Esau said, "Here I am ravenous for food. I am barely surviving! What good is my birthright to me now?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So Esau swore an oath to Jacob, trading away his rights as first born. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and drank and left.

Genesis 37:2-3

When Joseph was 17 years old, he used to accompany his brothers as they herded the flocks. Joseph would tattletale on the others to Jacob while they tended the animals, always presenting them in a negative light. Now Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than any of the others and gave Joseph a richly ornamented robe (embroidered robe, colorful robe with long flowing sleeves; Hebrew- *ketonet passim*).¹ When the brothers saw that Jacob loved him best, they were jealous, and had nothing but words of contempt for the boy.

¹ The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain; also in verses 23 and 32.

2 Samuel 13:17- 18

Amnon summoned an attendant and said, “Get rid of this woman (Tamar). Put her out, and bolt the door after her.” So the attendant put her out and bolted the door behind her. She was dressed in a richly ornamented robe (embroidered robe, colorful robe with long sleeves; Hebrew- *ketonet passim*)¹, the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore.

¹ The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain; also in verse 19.