



## Parashat Toledot

### Rebecca, Isaac and The Unambiguous Ambiguity of Prophecy

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#### 1. Genesis 25:23

כב וַיִּתְרַצְצוּ הַבָּנִים, בְּקִרְבָּהּ, וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-כֵּן, לָמָּה זֶה אֲנֹכִי; וַתֵּלֶךְ, לְדַרְשׁ אֶתֶּה. כִּג וַיֹּאמֶר יִהְיֶה לָּהּ, שְׁנֵי גֵיִים בְּבֶטְנָהּ, וּשְׁנֵי לְאָמִים, מִמֶּעֶיךָ יִפְרְדוּ; וְלֵאמֹם מִלֵּאָם יֵאָמֵץ, וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צֶעִיר. כִּד וַיִּמְלֵאוּ יָמֶיהָ, לְלֵדָתָהּ; וְהִנֵּה תוֹמָם, בְּבֶטְנָהּ. כֵּה וַיֵּצֵא הָרֵאשׁוֹן אֲדָמוֹנִי, כָּלֹ כְּאֲדָרֶת שַׁעַר; וַיִּקְרָאוּ שְׁמוֹ, עֵשָׂו. כו וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן יֵצֵא אַחִיו, וַיְדוּ אַחֲזָת בַּעֲקֵב עֵשָׂו, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, יַעֲקֹב

**22** And the children struggled together within her; and she said: 'If it be so, why do I live?' And she went to inquire of the LORD. **23** And the LORD said to her: Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated from your innards; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. **24** And when her days to deliver were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. **25** And the first came forth ruddy, all over like a hairy mantle; and they called his name Esau. **26** And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob.

#### 2. Genesis 27: 27-30

כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, יִצְחָק אָבִיו: גִּשְׁה-נָא וּשְׁקֵה-לִי, בְּנִי. כז וַיִּגַּשׁ, וַיִּשַׁק-לוֹ, וַיִּרַח אֶת-רֵיחַ בְּגָדָיו, וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ; וַיֹּאמֶר, רָאֵה רֵיחַ בְּנִי, כְּרֵיחַ שְׂדֵה, אֲשֶׁר בָּרַכּוּ יְהוָה. כח וַיִּתֵּן-לֶךְ, מִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ--וְרַב דָּגָן, וְתִירֹשׁ. כט יַעֲבֹדוך עַמִּים, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ (וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ) לְךָ לְאָמִים--הוּהוּ גְבִיר לְאַחִיךָ, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אִמְךָ; אַרְרִיךְ אַרְוִר, וּמִבְּרִכְיָךְ בְּרוּךְ. ל וַיְהִי, כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה יִצְחָק לְבַרְךָ אֶת-יַעֲקֹב, וַיְהִי אַף יֵצֵא יַעֲקֹב, מֵאֵת פְּנֵי יִצְחָק אָבִיו; וַעֲשֹׂו אַחִיו, בָּא מִצִּידוֹ

**27** And he came near, and kissed him. And he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said: See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. **28** So God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fat places of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. **29** Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be every one that curses you, and blessed be every one that blesses you. **30** And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of

blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

### 3. Genesis 28: 3-4

ג וְאֵל שֶׁדִּי יְבָרַךְ אֶתְךָ, וַיַּפְרֶךְ וַיְרַבְּךָ; וְהֵייתָ, לְקֹהֵל עַמִּים. ד וַיִּתֶּן-לְךָ אֶת-בְּרַכְתּוֹ אַבְרָהָם, לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֶךָ אֶתְךָ--לְרִשְׁתָּךְ אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִגְרִי, אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְאַבְרָהָם.

**3** And God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a congregation of peoples; **4** and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you, and to your seed with you; that you may inherit the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.'

### 4. I Kings 22

**2** And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. **3** And the king of Israel said to his servants: 'Know that Ramoth-gilead is ours, and we are still, and have not yet taken it out of the hand of the king of Aram?' **4** And he said to Jehoshaphat: 'Will you go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead?' And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel: 'I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.' **5** And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel: 'Inquire, I pray, at the word of the LORD today.' **6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them: 'Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I relent?' And they said: 'Go up; for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.'** **7** But Jehoshaphat said: 'Is there not here besides a prophet of the LORD, that we might inquire of him?' **8** And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat: 'There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Imlah; but I hate him; for he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil.' And Jehoshaphat said: 'Let not the king say so.' **9** Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said: 'Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imlah.' **10** Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, in a threshing-floor, at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. **11** And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron, and said: 'Thus says the LORD: With these gore the Arameans, until they be consumed.' **12** And all the prophets prophesied so, saying: 'Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper; for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.' **13** And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying: 'Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth, let your word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak good.' **14** And Micaiah said: 'As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that will I speak.' **15** And when he was come to the king, the king said to him:

'Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we relent?' And he answered him: 'Go up, and prosper; and the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king.' **16** And the king said to him: 'How many times shall I adjure thee that you speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' **17 And he said: 'I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd; and the LORD said: These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace.'** **18** And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat: 'Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?' **19** And he said: 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on his left. **20** And the LORD said: Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead. And one said: On this manner; and another said: On that manner. **21** And there came forth the spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said: I will entice him. **22** And the LORD said to him: Wherewith? And he said: I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said: You will entice him, and will prevail also; go forth, and do so. **23** Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has spoken evil concerning you.' **24** Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said: 'Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak to you?' **25** And Micaiah said: 'Behold, you will see on that day, when you will go into an inner chamber to hide yourself.' **26** And the king of Israel said: 'Take Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; **27** and say: Thus says the king: Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with scant bread and with scant water, until I come in peace.' **28** And Micaiah said: 'If you return at all in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.' And he said: 'Hear, you peoples, all of you.' **29** So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. **30** And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat: 'I will disguise myself, and go into the battle; but put on your robes.' And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. **31** Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty and two captains of his chariots, saying: 'Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.' **32** And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said: 'Surely it is the king of Israel'; and they turned aside to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out. **33** And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. **34** And a certain man drew his bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel . . . **37** So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. **38** And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; the harlots also washed

themselves there; according to the word of the LORD which He spoke. **39** Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? **40** So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

5. **Numbers 12:6-8**

“Hear these My words: When a prophet of the LORD arises among you, I<sup>a</sup> make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the LORD. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses!”

6. **Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 49b**

**All of the prophets observed** their prophecies **through an obscure looking glass [aspaklaria]**, i.e., their prophecies were given as metaphoric visions but were not a direct perception of the matter. However, **Moses our master observed** his prophecies **through a clear looking glass**, i.e., he gained a direct and accurate perception of the matter.

7. **Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Yesodei HaTorah 7:6**

Moses can prophesy at will; Moses can see the matter clearly; Moses can stand and speak with God without fainting; Moses alone is unable to return to ordinary life because his prophetic commission is clear and continuous

8. **Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 55a**

**And Rav Ḥisda said: A dream not interpreted is like a letter not read.** As long as it is not interpreted it cannot be fulfilled; the interpretation of a dream creates its meaning. **And Rav Ḥisda said: A good dream is not entirely fulfilled, and a bad dream is not entirely fulfilled. And Rav Ḥisda said: A bad dream is preferable to a good dream,** as a bad dream causes one to feel remorse and to repent. **And Rav Ḥisda said: A bad dream, his sadness is enough for him; a good dream, his joy is enough for him.** This means that the sadness or joy engendered by the dream renders the actual fulfillment of the dream superfluous.