

# 7 Give Truth to Jacob

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## Introduction

In the Hebrew Bible, the prophet Micah declares that God will “give truth to Jacob and lovingkindness to Abraham” (Micah 7:20). In the book of Genesis, Jacob is associated with cunning and deception. He manipulates his tired and hungry brother, Esau, into selling his birthright for nothing more than a bowl of stew. He later disguises himself, at his mother’s behest, to receive Esau’s blessing from his visually impaired father. You might think it appropriate that God will give truth to Jacob. Indeed, you might think, Jacob has a particular need for truth to make up for the deficit of truth in his youth.

That is not how the Jewish tradition tends to understand this verse. On the contrary, in just the way that Abraham was taken to be an exemplar of lovingkindness, Jacob was taken to be an exemplar, in his lifetime, of truthfulness.<sup>1</sup> By rewarding Jacob with truth and Abraham with lovingkindness, God will – on this account – be paying them both their dues. How can Jacob be the epitome of truthfulness, given the scenes of deception in his youth?

## An Ambiguous Prophecy

The story of Jacob begins while he is still in utero with his twin brother, Esau. Rebecca could feel the fetuses struggling with one another in her womb (Genesis 25:22). We are told that she goes to inquire of God as to what is going on. This is the response she receives (Ibid., 25:23):

Two nations are in your womb,  
Two separate peoples shall issue from your body;  
One people shall be mightier than the other,  
And the older shall serve the younger.

As it turns out, Esau was born first, with Jacob emerging afterwards, clinging onto his brother’s ankle. Since Jacob is the younger twin, we know that he is the favoured son; “the older shall serve the younger.” Jacob, and not Esau, will be heir to the covenant of Abraham and Isaac. But this is something that Isaac does not seem to know. Isaac, we’re told in no uncertain terms, favoured Esau

over Jacob (Genesis 25:28). We will investigate why momentarily. But first, we could ask, did Rebecca not inform her husband of the prophecy she received? If she did, did Isaac not believe her?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks points out an ambiguity in the wording of the prophecy that Rebecca received.<sup>2</sup> In the sentence, seemingly declaring how the older will serve the younger, the Hebrew word *et*, which standardly signals the object of the verb, is missing. That raises a question as to which of the brothers is really the object, and which is the subject, of the verb “to serve.” Rabbi Sacks continues:

Normally in biblical Hebrew the subject precedes the verb, and the object follows – but not always. In Job 14:19 for example, the words *avanim shahaku mayim* mean ‘water wears away stones,’ not ‘stones wear away water.’ Thus, while the phrase told to Rebecca might mean ‘the older shall serve the younger,’ it could also mean “the younger shall serve the older.’ To be sure, the latter would be poetic Hebrew rather than conventional prose style, but that is what this utterance is: a poem.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, even if Rebecca had told her husband of the prophecy she received, it was open to Isaac to read it in conformity with his preference for Esau.

Readers of the rest of the Bible will know that Esau is not looked upon as a virtuous character. Admittedly, his appearances in the book of Genesis can be read sympathetically. He might be a bit impetuous, but he is not painted as a monster – at least not obviously. In the heat of anger, after falling victim to Jacob’s deceit, Esau talks about killing his brother (Genesis 27:41). But was he serious about that? It is unclear. If the book of Genesis leaves a sympathetic reading of Esau in play, later books of the Bible are much clearer. In the book of Malachi (1:2–3), we are told in no uncertain terms that God loves Jacob and hates Esau. He and his descendants are utterly excoriated in the prophecy of Obadiah (see also Jeremiah 49:8–10). Readers of the Bible in its entirety should therefore see that Isaac, even if he had his own understanding of Rebecca’s prophecy, backed the wrong horse. Rebecca was right to favour Jacob. One might then wonder, why did Isaac favour Esau?

### Esau’s Appeal

The text does not give us much to go on. This is what we are told (Genesis 25:27–28):

When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Jacob became a mild man, a tent-dweller. Isaac favoured Esau because game was in his mouth, but Rebecca favoured Jacob.

The Midrash plays with the language of these verses to force a simple explanation of Isaac’s preference.<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew expression, which I have

rendered, “game was in his mouth,” could be translated as, “he trapped with his mouth.” Thus, the Midrash suggests: Esau was a skilful liar. He captured Isaac’s affection by lying to him and masking his wickedness from sight. This imaginative Midrash can hardly be adopted as a straightforward reading of the text. If anyone can be labelled a liar, from a straightforward reading of the relevant chapters, it will be Jacob and not Esau. How else then can we explain Isaac’s affection?

Perhaps the attraction is that Esau and Isaac are both men of the field. They are both lovers of the outdoors. The first time that Rebecca sees Isaac, he is walking in the field (Genesis 24:63–65). Having said that, on some readings of the relevant verse, it seems that Isaac had gone outdoors, at dusk, in order to meditate or pray.<sup>5</sup> Esau, by contrast, goes outdoors to hunt. These are very different sorts of outdoorsy people!

According to the midrash in which Esau is painted as a liar, the verse is referring to game in *Esau’s* mouth. Another line of inquiry (and a more straightforward reading) would have us read it as a reference to *Isaac’s* mouth. Esau was a skilful hunter and kept his father well-fed with the delicious flavours of the field (cf. Genesis 27:4). The Bible teaches us that bribery can “blind the eyes of the wise and pervert the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19). One Midrash suggests that this may be an allusion to Isaac; bribed by Esau’s gifts.<sup>6</sup> This creates a mirror imagery between Isaac’s inclining towards choosing Esau to be his heir, in virtue of the meat he supplies, and Esau’s willingness to sell his birthright to Jacob for his tasty lentil stew.<sup>7</sup>

But even if the wise and righteous Isaac was subconsciously swayed by Esau’s bribes, we still want to know how, in his own internal monologue, Isaac consciously justified his preference for Esau to himself. Subconsciously, the bribery may have been decisive, but surely not consciously. So, our question remains. Having dismissed Esau’s proclivity for hunting as an explanation of Isaac’s conscious deliberations, what other contrasts do we have to work with, when comparing Esau to Jacob?

Esau was born with a remarkably full head of hair. His name “Esau” means ready-made because he came out of the womb, in some sense, fully formed, and covered in hair (Genesis 25:25). Jacob, by contrast, was a “smooth-skinned man” (Genesis 27:11). Since we do not have much to go on, and since we are trying to get to the bottom of Isaac’s preference for Esau over Jacob, perhaps we should ask: why would Isaac prefer the strikingly hairy son to the smooth-skinned one? What might the hairiness of a person suggest?

Aviva [Gottlieb Zornberg \(1995\)](#) delves into the symbolic resonance of hair, at least in the Rabbinic imagination. For example, a voice speaks to Job from out of the whirlwind (which, in Hebrew, is called a *sa’ara*; Job 38:1). The Midrash deliberately misreads this verse. God did not speak to him from out of the whirlwind but “from every separate hair [*se’ar*] of Job’s head.”<sup>8</sup> Other than a convenient homophone, what would lead the Rabbis to imagine Job’s hair as a vehicle for his prophecy?

Less surprisingly, perhaps, given the association between his superpowers and his uncut hair, the Rabbis make a similar point about the prophecy of Samson. The book of Judges (13:25) tells us that, “The spirit of the Eternal [first] started to ring in him in the encampment of Dan, between [the towns of] Şor’a and Eshtaol.” The notion that prophecy *rang* in him, leads one Rabbi to declare, “When the holy spirit was resting on him, his hairs were tolling like a bell, and their sound went [all the way] from Şor’a to Eshtaol.”<sup>9</sup>

Gottlieb Zornberg brings these tropes about hair together and concludes that hair, in the Rabbinic imagination, somehow “represents an ambiguous inner-outer status, originating from within the body... [a] vehicle of energies that have their source in God.”<sup>10</sup> God communicates with Job and Samson through their *hair*. Hair makes things ambiguous as to where a person ends and where God begins. Instead of a smooth border, our hair gives us cloud-like edges, and God – after all – addresses us from amidst a thick cloud (Psalm 99:7). God lives in ambiguity.

Another Midrash, which Gottlieb Zornberg cites, describes God as nourishing every follicle of our hair.<sup>11</sup> This gives rise to an image of “the human being, whose many hairs bristle with a vitality born of a complex hidden nature endowed by God.”<sup>12</sup>

Beyond any flight of Rabbinic fancy about Job and Samson’s hair, Gottlieb Zornberg helps us to uncover a compelling account as to what Isaac sees in Esau, the hairy man of the field. There is clearly a vitality there; a mystique too; and a rugged ambiguity. Godly powers seem to be moving inside of him, causing every follicle of hair to bristle with life. Jacob, by comparison, the mild-mannered tent-dweller whose baby face suggests a lack of Divine energies bubbling within him, seems like a less attractive heir.

We are told that Isaac was distressed by Esau’s choice of wives (Genesis 26:34–35). And thus, Isaac was not blind to the passionate tempestuousness of his eldest son. But perhaps he thought that a person with so much passion and energy – the hairy, physically able, charismatic, hunter – would be a better leader of the Jewish people than a timid recluse, if only that passion and energy could be harnessed and directed towards God. This, I suggest, is the best explanation of Isaac’s preference that one can squeeze from the text.

### Rebecca’s Dilemma

But Isaac was wrong about Esau. He was wrong about Jacob too. Incidentally, the Rabbis do not always view hairiness in a positive light. Witness the following Midrash:

Rabbi Levi said a parable of a hairy man and a bald man that were standing on the threshing room floor. The chaff blew up onto the hairy man and got stuck in his hair. It blew up onto the bald man, and he placed his hand on his head, and wiped [the chaff] off. So too, the evil Esau becomes soiled in sins all the days of the year, and he has no means

of atonement, but Jacob becomes soiled in sin all the days of the year, [until] Yom Kippur comes, and [then] he has a means of atonement.<sup>13</sup>

Esau's hair is not a sign of Godliness. It is a sign of his entanglement in the world of sin. Jacob's smooth skin is not a sign of his timidity. It is a sign of his ability to stay clean from the taint that sin leaves behind.

We should not forget: however much Judaism might venerate hair, there are times when the Bible commands the complete removal of all bodily hair: for example, during the inauguration of the Levites (Numbers 8:7) and the rehabilitation of the lepers (Leviticus 14:9). The long-haired Samson is perhaps the Bible's least straight-forward hero. Think also of Absalom hanging on a tree from his luscious mane (II Samuel 18:9). Sometimes, somehow, hair can be an obstacle.

We are now in a better position to recognize the dilemma that Rebecca faced. She knew that her husband was wrong: wrong about Esau and wrong about Jacob too. Jacob was not too timid to lead the Jewish people. He did have Divine energy bubbling within. His hairlessness didn't signify a lack of vitality. But how could Rebecca communicate this to Isaac? Of course, she could simply tell him her opinion – she could tell him that Jacob is the right person to receive the blessing of Abraham and to inherit the birthright – but what evidence could she offer to shake Isaac of his misconceptions? What evidence could she offer that Jacob has the necessary vitality and (even) gall to carry the destiny of a nascent nation upon his shoulders? This is the dilemma that gave rise to her infamous ruse.

### Understanding Jacob's Deceit

Rebecca knows that Jacob is not empty on the inside and that he has the energy and audacity to lead a people. Having overheard Isaac requesting meat from Esau, and his intention to bestow his "innermost blessing" upon his oldest son (Genesis 27:4), Rebecca quickly prepares some meat of her own and instructs Jacob to take it to Isaac, disguised as Esau, complete with furry goatskin, to mimic Esau's hairy arms.

Jacob does as his mother instructs. He lies to his father. "I am Esau, your first-born," he says. "I have done as you told me. Pray sit up and eat of my game, that you may give me your innermost blessing" (Genesis 27:19). What *chutzpa*. What gall. But surely that is the point. In telling this bare-faced lie to his father, in a crude and hastily constructed disguise, Jacob was demonstrating to his father, and perhaps even to himself, that he really did have the audacity and passion required to lead a people. Was Isaac really deceived? Well, it is not entirely clear. A lot rests here upon the following four verses:

*Verse 21:* Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer that I may feel you, my son – whether you are really my son Esau or not."

*Verse 22:* So Jacob drew close to his father Isaac, who felt him and wondered. "The voice is the voice of Jacob, yet the hands are the hands of Esau."

*Verse 23:* He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau, and so he blessed him.

*Verse 24:* He asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he said, “I am.”

In verse 21, it seems that Isaac, despite his failing eyesight, is suspicious. In verse 22, it seems that the game is up. Sure, the hands are the hands of Esau, but Isaac is not stupid – the voice is the voice of Jacob. Jacob has come dressed up. But then again, if the costume was really such a failure, why does Isaac fail to recognize Jacob in verse 23, such that he has to ask him, in verse 24, whether he really is who he says he is? These verses are confusing. Here is how I suggest we should read them.

When Jacob draws close to his father, in verse 22, his father feels the costume and figures out exactly what is going on. But what shocks him is the notion that the mild-mannered Jacob would have the guts to try something like this. He is shocked to hear that someone with the voice of a Jacob – the inner purity of a mild-mannered tent-dweller – could manage to have the hands of an Esau. Accordingly, when we are told, in verse 23, that Isaac does not recognize him, the point is not that Isaac mistakes his identity. He knows that it is Jacob. He can feel that his costumed hands are like “those of his brother Esau” – the hint here is that Isaac knows that Esau is the *brother* of the person in this costume. Isaac knows that it is Jacob, but he does not recognize this *side* of Jacob. As if to test his resolve, in verse 24, to see if he would crack under the pressure, he asks again, “Are you really my son Esau?” and Jacob does not give in. He tells him, “I am.”

At this point, Isaac blesses Jacob. Does he give him the “blessing of Abraham” there and then? That is to say, does he bestow upon Jacob the status of heir to the Abrahamic covenant? Not yet. Isaac does not confer the blessing of Abraham to anybody until the next chapter (Genesis 28:1–4). Instead, he simply blesses his son, as any father might. He is, so to speak, biding his time.

But then, Esau enters. He has come too late. Isaac, we are told, is shaken to the core and seized with a violent trembling (Genesis 27:33). But if my reading of the text until now has been correct, then Isaac should not have been surprised. And yet, I think it was only then, when Isaac had witnessed his crestfallen elder son, pipped to the post by his upstart younger brother, that it occurred to him: not only was there more to Jacob than he had realized until now, but perhaps there was less to Esau. Perhaps Rebecca’s reading of her prophecy had been right all along. It really would be the older son who would serve the younger. Only then does Isaac call Jacob back, of his own accord, to offer him, voluntarily, “the blessing of Abraham.” Why? Because Rebecca’s ruse and Jacob’s disguise, which Isaac had seen right through, had revealed a truth about Jacob to Isaac (and perhaps to Jacob himself) that Isaac had never appreciated until now. After the deception, and after witnessing the crestfallen Esau, Isaac chooses Jacob.

## Kant and Jewish Law

The Rabbinic consensus, as it crystalizes into Jewish law, does not demand truthfulness at all times.<sup>14</sup> There are specific circumstances in which Jewish law permits (and sometimes demands) deception and even outright lies. The sin of deception (let alone outright lying), when no such exception applies, is known as *geneivat daat*. According to the canons of Jewish law, a person is allowed to deceive (or even sometimes lie) to preserve a state of peace. But that exception is only operative if the objective cannot be achieved without deception/lying, and if the discord prevented or ended by the lie/deception is not assessed to be such that it will reemerge in exacerbated form if and when the lie/deception is exposed.<sup>15</sup> Other exceptions include deception (and sometimes even lying) to protect modesty, humility, and privacy, and to prevent exploitation (and, it should go without saying, to save a life).<sup>16</sup> The problem for the Jewish jurist is that none of these exemptions self-evidently apply to the case at hand, and so it would seem that Jacob is guilty of *geneivat daat*.

Immanuel Kant's ethical condemnation of lying knows of no exceptions. He argued that to assert a falsehood is to violate a categorical imperative. Even to save a life, a person can, according to Kant, at most, assert a deceptive truth, but never a falsehood. It is clear that, for Kant, the obligation is not to promote true beliefs in others, or to prevent other people from forming false beliefs. The obligation is merely never to assert a falsehood. In this way, Kant defended his own conduct when he misled Friedrich Wilhelm II.<sup>17</sup> He assured the king, who took exception to Kant's religious doctrines, that "As your Majesty's faithful subject, I shall in the future completely desist from all public lectures or chapters concerning religion." When the king died, Kant resumed his teaching on religious topics. Although the King would have likely understood Kant to be taking upon himself a lifetime commitment, Kant had left himself a loophole. Technically, he had qualified his commitment to desist from future teaching of religious topics under the scope of being the king's "faithful subject." As such, once the king had died, the commitment could evaporate because Kant could no longer be considered a subject of the king to whom he had made the promise.

As Alasdair MacIntyre understands Kant's point, "My duty is to assert only what is true and the mistaken inferences which others may draw from what I say or what I do are ... not my responsibility, but theirs."<sup>18</sup> In a sense, this is a selfish ethic. It puts truth-telling on a pedestal, since the obligation not to lie knows of no exceptions, but it expresses no deep concern for the epistemic state of those who hear your assertions. You have no responsibility to shepherd your interlocutors to the correct interpretation of your words. You do not want the moral stain of falsehood to taint your good character, but you need have no deep concern for how your words are understood.

Kant would not tell a lie to save a life and yet he does not care too much how other people interpret his words, so long as they are true. I do not see the attraction of this Kantian ethic, but if you do, our Biblical story will cause

you trouble. Just as Jacob seems to be guilty of *geneivat daat*, he seems to have violated Kant's categorical imperative. He did not merely leave Isaac to draw false inferences from true assertions. Instead, he told a barefaced lie. When Isaac asks Jacob, which of his sons he is, he says, "I am Esau, your first-born" (Genesis 27:19).

Despite these appearances, there have been attempts to read the story in ways that vindicate Jacob from the sin of *geneivat daat*. There have likewise been attempts to read the story in ways that would vindicate him of wrongdoing even by Kantian lights. The famous medieval exegete, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (otherwise known as Rashi), finds a way of parsing Jacob's words such that he, technically, did not tell a lie. Instead of answering his father's question with the words, "I am Esau, your first-born"; the Hebrew words in question allow, at a stretch, for the following translation: "I am me. Esau is your first-born." If such a reading can be sustained, then Jacob's words were deceptive, but he did not lie. If Isaac drew a false inference from those words, then that would be Isaac's responsibility, not Jacob's. Kant would be proud!

Moreover, since Jacob had rightfully purchased the birthright from Esau in Chapter 25, Jacob stood at risk of being exploited by Esau's illicitly receiving the blessing that he had sold. Arguably, this would constitute an instance in which the prohibition of *geneivat daat* is suspended.<sup>19</sup> These vindications of Jacob have recently been developed skilfully by Shira Weiss (2019). It is however my contention that these attempts to reconcile the story with Kantian ethics and with external canons of Jewish law miss the point of the story. The point of the story is that Kantian ethics are wrong about the duty to tell the truth and that the sin of *geneivat daat* cannot apply to a lie that is told in the service of truth.

### **Falsehood in the Service of Truth**

What is so interesting about Jacob's lie, and what other readings miss, is that his falsehoods were aimed at communicating a truth. This is not the sort of case, familiar to Jewish law, in which the value of truth is superseded by the value of peace, humility, modesty, privacy, or the prevention of exploitation. On the contrary, the value of truth is not superseded in this case at all. Accordingly, it cannot be called *geneivat daat*, which literally means, the stealing of knowledge. Instead, the lie is told for the purpose of communicating a truth and *extending* Isaac's knowledge.

A value can be baked into an ethical system in more than one way. Robert Nozick nicely illustrates this with his distinction between a *goal* and a *constraint* (Nozick, 1999, pp. 28–30). If you value X, then you can bake it into your ethical system by making it the goal of all action. That is exactly how utilitarianism bakes the value of pleasure into its calculations: always act so as to maximize net pleasure. To build a value into your system as a constraint, by contrast, would be to say, act in whatever way you like, so long as you do not diminish X. Of course, you can have more than one value.



One can be baked in as a goal and the other as a constraint. For example, you might have an ethic that says, always act so as to maximize X (i.e., X is the goal), but only so long as, in so doing, you do not diminish Y (i.e., not diminishing Y is the constraint).<sup>20</sup>

If my reading of the story of Jacob is correct, then it carries an implicit criticism of Kantian ethics, a criticism that Nozick's distinction can help us to articulate. Kant is right to value truth-telling, but he bakes this value into his ethical system in the wrong place. He treats truth-telling as a constraint on assertion. However, the promotion of truth is better treated as a *goal* and not as a constraint. Kant's acts of assertion are *constrained* by a formal requirement not to say something false, but he seems unmoved by the altruistic *goal* of spreading true belief. But spreading true belief should be the goal of assertion (a goal which we sometimes suspend in deference to the value of peace, modesty, privacy, etc.). And this goal should not be constrained by the obligation never to tell a lie. Sometimes, as we have seen in the case of Jacob, a lie can be the only way, ultimately, to help somebody to see the truth. Isaac would never have believed that Jacob had the gall that Isaac was looking for in a leader until he saw him attempt this ludicrous feat of deception. It was a lie in the service of truth.

The notion that one can lie in the name of spreading true belief, at least as that notion is rooted in our story, comes along with three key provisos. First: the person to whom the lie was told should also be the very person to benefit from the illumination, once the lie has been revealed for what it was. The person lied to, and the person who benefits from the subsequent illumination that the lie provides, have to be *the same person*.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, notice that the lie was about Jacob's identity, and it was told in order to communicate the truth about Jacob's identity (namely, that Jacob was not the damp squib that Isaac had taken him to be). Accordingly, a second restriction suggests itself: even when lying in order to promote true belief, the lie must be about the same topic as the resultant true belief.<sup>22</sup> The third proviso all but follows from the first two and also emerges from the Biblical story: once the true belief is revealed, nothing about the lie will still be believed. So long as these three provisos are met, the Biblical story, as I understand it, is telling us that it is acceptable to lie in the service of truth.

### Other Episodes in Jacob's Life

So far, we have established that his lie to Isaac does not undermine the Rabbinic association between Jacob and truth. After all, on our reading of the story, this was a lie that was told in the service of truth. But, even if the episode in question no longer undermines it, we have not done enough to *vindicate* the association between Jacob and truth. Admittedly, his lie was told in the service of truth, but it did not really come from Jacob. The initiative was Rebecca's. What else, in the life of Jacob, might help us to make sense of the Rabbinic association between Jacob and *truth*?

Rebecca and Jacob's ruse has immediate consequences. Esau is so angry that he explicitly considers killing Jacob (Genesis 27:41). Rebecca overhears. This sets wheels in motion which results in Jacob fleeing to the home of his uncle, Laban. *En route*, he stops for the night and has his iconic dream, in which "a ladder was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it" (Genesis 28:12). In the continuation of this dream, God stood over Jacob, telling him all sorts of reassuring things:

the ground on which you are lying I will grant to you and to your offspring... your offspring shall be as [numerous as] the dust of the earth... all of the families of the earth shall be blessed through you and your descendants. ... I will protect you wherever you go.

And yet, despite all of these comforting words, when Jacob awakens he is described as being afraid. "He was afraid, and he said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and this is the gateway to heaven'" (Genesis 28:17).

The verb that describes Jacob as afraid, "וַיִּירָא," and the adjective that Jacob uses to describe the location of his dream as awesome, "בְּיִרְאָה," share a root. Accordingly, we do not have to say that Jacob was left *scared* by his dream so much as *awestruck*. Nevertheless, there is at least a possibility here that something really had left Jacob frightened. What might that be? Why isn't the emotion one of confidence or self-assurance, in the wake of all of God's kind promises? Why the awe or fear?

We should also pay attention to the imagery of the dream. You might expect that angels would descend from a heavenly portal, and then, once they had achieved whatever it is that they had come down for, they would go back up. Down first. Up second. But these angels ascend the ladder first, and only then do they descend. That does not seem right. The Midrash ties these questions together.

Rabbi Samuel son of Nachman said, "These [angels signify] the nations of the world" ... The Holy One, blessed be He, showed Jacob the ministering angel of Babylon rise up seventy rungs [of the ladder] and descend. [The ministering angel] of Media [rise up] fifty-two rungs and descend. And [the ministering angel] of Greece [rise up] a hundred rungs and descend. And [the ministering angel] of Rome, [Jacob saw him] ascend and ascend and [Jacob] didn't know how many [rungs the angel of Rome would climb]. At that moment, Jacob, our father, was afraid, and he said, "maybe this one has no descent." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to [Jacob], "And you shall not fear, Jacob my servant" and "be not dismayed, oh Israel" (Jeremiah 30:10). Even if you see him, so to speak, rise all the way up to me, from there I will cause him to descend. As it is written (Obadiah 1:4), "Should you rise like an

eagle, and place your nest between the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD.”<sup>23</sup>

Our Midrash echoes the words of the Bible: “He was afraid, and he said...”; placing those words within the dream itself. Jacob had, indeed, seen something scary. He had seen the rise of four great empires that would seek to destroy the Jewish people. This explains why the angels start on the ground. They were symbolizing the rise and fall of these civilizations. The empire that ruled over Rabbi Samuel, the author of our Midrash, was Rome; an empire that seemed to rise and rise. One could legitimately fear: would they ever fall? Would the oppression ever cease?

Earlier in the book of Genesis, God had made a covenant with Abraham. He was promised a large nation, a land, and more. But, in the process of sealing that covenant, Abraham was given a terrifying prophetic glimpse of the national tragedies that would befall his people before they receive the full promise of the covenant (Genesis 15:12–18). Accordingly, the Rabbis here imagine that the promises in Jacob’s dream must also have come along with a terrifying vision of the bad times that would befall his descendants. Thus, in one fell swoop, the Midrash links Jacob’s dream to Abraham’s vision; it explains why these angels start on the ground, and why they then descend; and it explains why Jacob’s sense of awe was tinged with a residue of fear, like the terror that struck Abraham.

But the Midrash continues. In so doing, it asks a charming question. Why didn’t Jacob, in the dream, try to climb the ladder?

Rabbi Samuel son of Yosina used to expand on the verse, “Nevertheless they continued to sin, and didn’t have faith in [God]’s wonders” (Psalms 78:32). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to [Jacob], if you had climbed the ladder, and had faith, you would never have had a descent. But because you didn’t have faith, behold, your descendants will be subjugated by all four of these empires in this world, by taxes, oppression, and exiles.

Jacob was presented, in his dream, with a rare opportunity: a ladder straight up to heaven. But, in the language of the Psalms, he “Nevertheless continued to sin.” What was his sin? His sin was not to climb the ladder, not to seize the opportunity. This apparently reflected a lack of “faith in God’s wonders.”

Jacob was a mild-mannered young man who was pure of heart. These character traits were the source of Isaac’s hesitation. Would Jacob be able to lead a nascent nation? Or would his purity be his undoing? Rebecca demonstrated to Isaac and Jacob, that Jacob did have the necessary gall to lead, but it did not come naturally to him. That is part of what makes the Rabbinic interpretation of Jacob’s dream so compelling. The ladder, on their reading, represents the

world of politics and statecraft. Jacob knows that he cannot get involved without getting his hands dirty. He sees every nation try to rise, and he sees every nation fall. He would rather stay, with his untainted purity, on the ground.

Sometimes, doing the right thing can leave something of a taint behind. The right thing to do is sometimes damaging to our purity. And so Jacob wakes up afraid. He knows that he has been promised wonderful things, but he knows that there is a long journey ahead; that other nations will rise and fall before the Israelites learn that they have to take the opportunities that come their way. And perhaps he remains afraid of the Israelites getting their hands dirty too, as they climb.

The one lie that Jacob told, in the service of truth, continues to have terrible consequences for him. Not only does it cause him to flee for his life, but – when he arrives at the home of Laban – the lie that he once told is used as justification for playing a fateful trick upon him. He was, famously, tricked into marrying Leah (Laban’s eldest daughter), when he thought he was marrying his beloved Rachel (Laban’s younger daughter). Laban presents this deception as a simple case of Jacob getting his comeuppance. He said, “It is not our custom here, to place the younger before the older” (Genesis 29:26). In other words: you tricked your way into the place of your older brother. We are not like that here. Leah is the elder sister, so she had to be married first. Jacob has arrived in a world of trickery and deceit.<sup>24</sup>

And yet, he seems to grow from the encounter. As he fled from the land of Israel, he had been afraid of the angels that he saw climbing the ladder. On his way back to Israel, after many years of work in the home of Laban, he is presented as being in command of the angels. Having just seen an encampment of angels (Genesis 32:3), Jacob’s first act upon returning to Israel is to send messengers to Esau (Genesis 32:4). Since the Hebrew word for angel and messenger, *מלאך*, is the same word, and since angels appeared in the previous verse, the strong suggestion of the text is that Jacob sends actual angels to be his messengers. Jacob is transformed.

Jacob has grown into a man, capable of living in this world of moral ambiguity whilst maintaining his religious sensibilities. Before he confronts his brother, he fights with an angel and prevails.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he will not leave the battle before the angel blesses him (Genesis 32:27). This is, then, a man who recognizes that wrestling in the dark of the night, and the soil of the earth, is also to wrestle with divinity, and with angels, and that it can be an opportunity to grow and, indeed, to receive a blessing. Moreover, he receives a new name (Genesis 32:29): Israel, “because you have striven with beings Divine and human, and you have prevailed.”

As if to underline this understanding of Jacob, and his evolution, Rashi reads Jacob’s message to Esau as containing a numerical code.<sup>26</sup> His message states that “I lived with Laban”; but the numerical value of the letters of the phrase, “I lived” (in Hebrew “*גרתִי*”), is 613. This is the figure traditionally given to number the commandments of the Bible. According to Rashi, Jacob is telling Esau that despite living with the evil Laban, and despite having

to toil in business, and to live with his trickery, I nevertheless managed to observe the 613 commandments, without learning from Laban's evil ways. I managed to maintain the voice of Jacob even if I had to garb myself in the clothes of an Esau.

Rashi therefore recognizes that Jacob has come a long way from the tent-dwelling introvert. It is one thing to keep the Torah while staying in the tent of Isaac. It is another thing to retain one's religious compass whilst striving to survive in a world that is populated with charlatans and cheats. Jacob's growth is best captured, I think, by the Midrashic response to Genesis 32:8. In that verse, having been told that Esau is approaching with a large military force, we are now told that Jacob was "greatly afraid and distressed." Rabbi Yehuda, the son of Ilai, wants to know why Jacob was afraid *and* distressed. What is the difference here, between "fear" and "distress"? The Hebrew Bible tends to be economical with its adjectives. Why do we need two, in this instance? Rabbi Yehuda answers:

[Jacob] was afraid that he would be killed and distressed that he may have to kill. He said, "if he gets the better of me, he will kill me, and, if I get the better of him, I will kill him." And thus he was afraid that he would be killed and distressed that he may have to kill.<sup>27</sup>

As I understand it, this is Jacob's triumph. He is no longer the young man who would, by nature, refuse (at least not without his mother's prodding) to get his hands dirty in order to do the right thing. Jewish law mandates us to kill in self-defence. If Jacob had to kill Esau to save his own life (or the life of another), then he would have fulfilled a religious obligation. And, of course, he was willing to do so. But not every religious obligation is one that we should enjoy. Jacob will act, but the prospect of such an action distresses him nevertheless. He had managed to maintain the moral sensitivity of a Jacob and to combine it with the forthright ability to act in this world.

On the one hand you have the young Jacob, whose purity renders him almost unable to act. On the other hand, there are the Esaus of this world who see no moral complexity. They do what they think is right and pay no heed to the stains that gather on their soul, and the fraying of their moral fibre; the chaff that gets entangled in their hair. But then you have the Jacob of his maturity; a Jacob who understands that even doing the right thing can have a moral cost. It distresses him. But it does not paralyze him. This is the leader that Rebecca foresaw. Only such a character has the sensitivity to want to ameliorate the negative consequences that stem from his right actions (as we see in his efforts, eventually, to reconcile with Esau). Only such a character has the insight to recognize that there is no smooth terrain in the ethical landscape of this world. And only such a character can have the audacity to wrestle with an ethical dilemma, refusing to let it go, limping on and on,<sup>28</sup> until it leaves us blessed.

Admittedly, the story of Jacob does not end with his triumphant return to Israel.<sup>29</sup> If anything, upon his return, Jacob quickly seems to fade into the background. His sons take the lead in negotiations with the people of Shechem, after the rape and abduction of their sister. Those negotiations were a deceitful ruse, which Simeon and Levi escalated into a wholesale massacre. Concern for the truth is very far from the surface, among Jacob's children.

Moreover, the results of Jacob's initial deceit, to the extent that it caused him to have two wives, rather than one, continued to cause him terrible trouble. The children of the two wives (and their two handmaids) inherit the competition of their mothers. Jacob is unable to hide the fact that Joseph (the first son of his most beloved and dearly departed wife) is his favourite. This recipe for sibling strife eventually descends into the horrible, averted fratricide that left Joseph sold into slavery, and Jacob bereft. Through all of these episodes, Jacob seems passive, almost absent, as his children take centre stage of the Biblical narrative. Why?

The Midrash makes a compelling suggestion that gels with the character portrait of Jacob that I have been sketching, and which pays careful attention to a nuance in the text. To understand the significance of the Midrash, we must note that Biblical Hebrew contains two words for the verb "to dwell" or "to live in a place." The first is **לשבת** and the second is **לגור**. The first shares its root with the Hebrew word for sitting. To dwell in a place, this word suggest, is to reside there. It is to rest one's weight in a given location. It is to rest one's weary legs. The second word shares its root with the Hebrew word for a stranger. This is counter-intuitive. To be a stranger seems to be at odds with being at home in a place. English translations tend to use "to dwell" in place of **לשבת**, and "to sojourn" in place of **לגור**. Perhaps the idea is that "sojourning" carries with it a nuance of transience. To dwell in a place, by contrast, is to make it one's home. To sojourn somewhere is simply to stay there for a while, before journeying on.

Once Jacob emerges, triumphant, from his reunion with Esau, the Torah tells us that: "Jacob dwelt in the land where his father had sojourned, the land of Canaan" (Genesis 37:1). The verse uses both of our verbs for living in a place. Pointedly, it suggests that Jacob sought to have a relationship with the land that his father did not have. Jacob sought to dwell where his father merely sojourned. Jacob had sojourned with Laban, and now he wants to settle down in the land of Israel.

Enter the Midrash:

Rav Acha said: As soon as the righteous dwell in tranquility, and seek to dwell in tranquility in this world, Satan comes and prosecutes, and says, "Is that which has been prepared for them in the world to come not enough, that they should seek to dwell in tranquility in this world too?!" Know that this is so. As soon as Jacob our father sought to dwell in tranquility in this world, Satan came upon him [in order to instigate the trouble] with Joseph. "And Jacob dwelt..."<sup>30</sup>

Jacob sought to settle down in the land of his father's sojourning. Jacob sought to feel at home in the land of his father's estrangement.

This is how I understand the Midrash, and Jacob's stepping aside from the centre of the Biblical narrative. Jacob was always reluctant to engage with the world around him, always reluctant – as we saw – to dirty his hands. And since he had proven himself in the house of Laban, for all of those years; and since he had proven himself in his confrontation with Esau, he thought he had earned the right, so to speak, to retire from the world, to return to the tent-dwelling studious lifestyle of his youth, to return to the life he lived before his mother encouraged him to deceive his father, to return to the peace and the quiet that surrounded him in the purity of his youth. But our Midrash criticizes Jacob for this.

There is plenty of peace and quiet stored up for the righteous in the perfect existence of the world to come. But in the meantime, we live in a broken world, and we are summoned to play our part in fixing it. The problem with feeling at home, anywhere on earth, is that we start to feel injured to the evil, the pain, and the suffering in our midst. To feel at home in a broken world is to be reconciled to its brokenness, or to ignore it. And that is why, as far as the Midrash is concerned, we are summoned to view ourselves always as strangers, even in the Promised land, as did Abraham and Isaac. Whether or not he was worthy of criticism, it fits well with our portrait to imagine that Jacob, upon returning to the land of Israel, was hoping to retire to the obscurity and the purity of his tent.

Having completed this potted biography of Jacob, the question is: how does this relate to his relationship with truth?

### Exemplification

Jacob lied to Isaac. He said, "I am Esau your firstborn." On my reading of this story, Jacob's lie conveyed to Isaac a deep truth about Jacob. The truth was something like this: Jacob has much more *chutzpa* and gall than Isaac had previously thought. Let's call that claim P. What was the mechanism by which Jacob's words were able to convey P to Isaac? P is not the proposition conventionally expressed by the sentence that Jacob used. So how did it work? Jacob's words didn't express P. Instead, I suggest, his speech-act, which required *chutzpa* and gall, exemplified the truth of P.

What does it mean to exemplify something? As Josef Stern<sup>31</sup> notes: "The notion of exemplification was first discussed by C. S. Peirce, but in recent years the one who has explored it the most deeply is Nelson Goodman."<sup>32</sup> I would go so far as to say that it was explored, earlier still, by F. H. Bradley. Admittedly, Bradley did not call it exemplification. He referred to it as the use of a sign with "original content," as opposed to "acquired content."<sup>33</sup> Bradley's example of exemplification would be a botanist using a particular flower as an example, to refer to its entire species, by way of the properties

that it shares with every other instance of its kind. Goodman illustrates exemplification with the following example:

Consider a tailor's booklet of small swatches of cloth. These function as samples, as symbols exemplifying certain properties. But a swatch does not exemplify all its properties; it is a sample of color, weave, texture, and pattern, but not of size, shape, or absolute weight or value. Nor does it even exemplify all the properties – such as having been finished on a Tuesday – that it shared with the given bolt or run of material. Exemplification is possession plus reference. To have without symbolizing is merely to possess, while to symbolize without having is to refer in some other way than by exemplifying. The swatch exemplifies only those properties that it both has and refers to.<sup>34</sup>

Because Goodman was a nominalist, and so did not really believe in the existence of properties, his own account has to have an epicycle that need not bother us. Rather, drawing from Stern,<sup>35</sup> we can define exemplification as follows: an object *o* exemplifies a property *P*, in a given situation, if and only if (i) *o* possesses *P* and (ii), in that situation, *o* “symbolizes, stands for, or refers to” *P*. As Bradley's example makes clear, it is not only properties that can be exemplified. A whole set or species can be exemplified, indirectly, via the properties shared by the exemplar and all of the members of the set or species.

As soon as one tries to understand, in a systematic fashion, how we manage to understand exemplification, and to deploy it ourselves, an obvious problem emerges. How are we supposed to know which of the object's properties are being referred to and which we are supposed to ignore? In Goodman's example, we know that it is the colour, weave, texture, and pattern that we are supposed to notice and the size, shape, and absolute weight or value that we are supposed to ignore. But how do we figure that out? As Catherine Elgin points out, an ornithologist could point to a specific bird to exemplify “being a junco” in one context and he could use the very same bird to exemplify “being a nonmigratory bird” in a different context.<sup>36</sup> So many subtle clues in context help us to figure out what an exemplar is supposed to exemplify. Indeed, the clues for exemplification are so many and so subtle that it seems as if we simply “cannot generalize its conditions in any precise way.”<sup>37</sup>

Though I do not adopt everything that Elgin has to say about exemplification (and the role that she takes them to play in what she calls “felicitous falsehood”), I agree with her wholeheartedly that exemplification helps us to reach a deeper level of understanding than can be facilitated by mere propositional belief or knowledge. For one thing, a student's ability to generate examples of a phenomenon at will is perhaps the best way for her to display her understanding.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Elgin points to the fact that mathematicians look for proofs even of things that they already know to be true, which is what happens when you prove that  $2 + 3 = 5$  by deriving it as a theorem from



Peano's axioms, for example. Why do we look for such proofs, if we already know their conclusions to be true? Elgin suggests:

The function of a proof [in this context] is to make the necessary truth of a particular mathematical proposition manifest – that is, to exemplify its necessary truth and to exemplify relations between its truth and other mathematical truths.<sup>39</sup>

Accordingly, we can conclude that exemplification plays a crucial role in our coming to appreciate, understand, and *master* the truth. But we have also seen the inherent ambiguity implicit in exemplification since no one concrete entity can be a potential exemplar for just one category. A word can refer to a property or an object without any ambiguity at all; not by sharing some property with its referent, but by convention.<sup>40</sup> Exemplification is different. In treating something as an exemplar, there is always going to be “noise” to filter out – there will be the properties we must attend to, and those we must ignore. For example:

The novice who emulates the performance of an expert treats that expert as an exemplar. She identifies the features of his behavior that she thinks account for his success. That is, she factors his complex behavior into elements, selectively disregards those she considers irrelevant to his effectiveness [*i.e.*, the noise], and sets herself to reproduce the rest.<sup>41</sup>

In Plato's heaven there may be such a thing as a pure exemplar. The Platonic form of beauty, for example, is – in some sense or other – only germane to explanations of beautiful things, and the form of goodness is only germane to explanations of good things. In such a scheme, there are no admixtures, impurities, or unholy alliances. We are not dealing here with motely extensions, like the extension of the set of animals with kidneys, which happens to be identical to the set of animals with hearts, such that you will not immediately be able to tell, for any given animal used as an exemplar, whether it is supposed to exemplify having a kidney or having a heart. In Plato's heaven, rather than motely extensions, we have pure joint-carving intensions.

When dealing with concrete realia, by contrast, and when we use them to exemplify, as we must, if we are to increase our understanding and purchase over the truth, then we have to get used to impure admixtures and learn to filter out the noise. This insight, I think, is what makes Jacob such an excellent archetype for truth. First of all, he has to exemplify his gall and ability to lead, to Isaac, because it was the only way of conveying that truth to him. Secondly, in the climax of his life story, he comes to terms with the fact that he can only be an example to future generations of how to live a life of moral

rectitude if he would be willing to showcase those virtues in and among the gritty situations of human life in a concrete world.

Jacob stands for various ideals – purity, integrity, justice, and goodness – which gives him a natural tendency towards quietism. He does not want to sully those ideals. But, with his mother’s encouragement, he comes to realize and later embody the notion that the only way to exemplify an ideal in this non-ideal world, and thereby to serve as a potential role model, and exemplar of virtue, is to be willing to pollute that ideal to some degree, by allowing it to coexist in various concrete admixtures, without losing the sensitivity that leads one to bemoan this fact. It is only through the (always impure)<sup>42</sup> exemplification of ideals that we can achieve and convey to others a deep understanding of their reality.

I finish with a Midrash:

Rabbi Simon said: When God was about to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and companies, some of them saying, ‘Let him be created,’ while others urged, ‘Let him not be created.’ Thus it is written, ‘Love and truth fought together, righteousness and peace combated each other’ (Psalms 5:11). Love said, ‘Let him be created, because he will perform acts of love.’ Truth said, ‘Let him not be created because all of him will be falsehood.’ Righteousness said, ‘Let him be created, because he will do righteous deeds.’ Peace said, ‘Let him not be created, because he will be all strife.’ What did the Holy One do [in the face of this deadlock]? He took truth and cast it to the ground [so as to ensure a majority in favour of creating the world], as it is said, ‘Thou didst cast down truth to the ground’ (Daniel 8:2). The ministering angels dared say to the Holy One, ‘Master of the universe, why do You humiliate Your seal?’<sup>43</sup>

The Midrash ends on an ambiguous note. Since it does not tell us who speaks the following words – whether it is still the angels, complaining to God, or whether it is actually God’s response – I prefer to read it as the latter. And thus, on my reading, this is how God responds. He says, “Let truth arise from the earth. Hence it is written, ‘Let truth spring up from the earth.’” (Psalms 85:12)

God reassures his angels. Don’t worry that truth has been exiled from heaven. In heaven, truth is pristine and uncompromising, but it is also almost impossible for finite beings in a concrete world to achieve a measure of understanding over it. To be grasped and mastered by humans, in their epistemic situation, various truths need to be exemplified rather than communicated in some other way. In this sense, truth needs to grow up from the ground, embedded in all sorts of impure admixtures. In any given exemplification, there will be noise to cancel out. No character in the Bible better embodies this lesson than Jacob, whom God will – according to Micah – reward with truth.<sup>44</sup>

## Notes

- 1 See, for example, *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Reeh* 14, *Midrash Tehillim* 15:4, and the *Zohar* III:151a. Admittedly, Rashi's commentary to Micah interprets Jacob's gift of truth as a reward not for his own truthfulness but for Abraham's lovingkindness.
- 2 On this, Rabbi Sacks is following the medieval commentators, Rabbis David Kimche and Joseph ibn Kaspi.
- 3 Jonathan Sacks, *Covenant and Conversation: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible; Genesis: The Book of Beginnings* (Jerusalem: Maggid Books and the Orthodox Union, 2009), 155.
- 4 *Bereshit Rabba* 63:10.
- 5 The verb *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה* in Genesis 24:63 is of uncertain meaning. It could mean, "to walk" but it could mean "to meditate."
- 6 *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Toldot* 8.
- 7 A symmetry suggested to me by Eleonore Stump.
- 8 *Bereshit Rabba* 4:4.
- 9 Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah* 7b.
- 10 Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 168.
- 11 *Tanchuma*, *Tazria* 6.
- 12 Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire*, 168.
- 13 *Bereshit Rabba* 65:15.
- 14 The exposition both of Jewish law and of Kantian ethics, in this section, is indebted to Shira Weiss, "The Morality of Biblical Deception: Misleading Truths, Geneivat Da'at, and Jacob's Deception of Isaac," in *Jewish Philosophy in an Analytic Age*, eds. Samuel Lebens, Aaron Segal, and Dani Rabinowitz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 263–275.
- 15 See *Hafetz Hayim*, *Hilkot Rekhilut* 1:8 and Aaron Levine, *Economic Morality and Jewish Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 36.
- 16 See Tractate *Baba Metzia* 23b–24a.
- 17 Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 239–243.
- 18 Alasdair MacIntyre, "Truthfulness, Lies and Moral Philosophers: What can we learn from Mill and Kant?" in *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 337.
- 19 See the *Torah Shleima* of Rabbi Menachem Kasher to Genesis 27:19 #76.
- 20 Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 28.
- 21 This proviso was suggested to me by Aaron Segal.
- 22 This proviso was suggested to me by Nevin Climenhaga, although – I concede – more needs to be said as to what constitutes *sameness of topic*.
- 23 *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Vayeitze* 2.
- 24 The rivalry between his two wives and his preference for Rachel have their own downstream consequences in terms of Jacob's regrettable favouritism towards Joseph, the son of Rachel, and the rivalry between the brothers. All of it, in a sense, stems back to the lie that Jacob told his father.
- 25 We only discover that this man, with whom Jacob wrestles, was an angel, in Hoseah 12:5.
- 26 See Rashi to Genesis 32:5. Rashi is here following *Midrash Breshit Rabbatai*.
- 27 *Bereshit Rabba* 76:2.
- 28 I refer here to the injury that Jacob sustained in his confrontation with the angel (Genesis 32:36).
- 29 Thanks to Josef Stern for impressing upon me the need to include this excursion through Jacob's later years.

- 30 Bereshit Rabba 84:3.
- 31 Josef Stern, *Metaphor in Context* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 154.
- 32 Stern is referring to C. S. Peirce, “Logic as Semiotics: The Theory of Signs,” in *Philosophical Writs of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955) and Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976).
- 33 F. H. Bradley, *The Principles of Logic* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Company, 1883), 7.
- 34 Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 53.
- 35 Stern, *Metaphor in Context*, 154.
- 36 Catherine Z. Elgin, *True Enough* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), 189.
- 37 Stern, *Metaphor in Context*, 155.
- 38 Elgin, *True Enough*, 183.
- 39 *Ibid*, 200.
- 40 Onomatopoeia might be an interesting exception, since they are words that refer in virtue of sharing some sort of property with their referents.
- 41 *Ibid*, 194.
- 42 By “impure” here, I only mean that the exemplification will carry with it *noise* that will have to be factored out. A pure exemplification would have no such noise.
- 43 *Bereshit Rabba* 8:5.
- 44 My thanks to Eleonore Stump and Judith Wolfe for hosting the series of online seminars at which this chapter was first presented. Thanks to all of my fellow seminar participants for their enriching feedback.

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