

ParShaT *ToLeDoTh*- One Pager Series

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[Background: We continue to bring controversies between Rashi and either academic scholars or other Jewish commentaries. Today we deal with the following wild Rashi]

Rashi #1 Biblical Text: Gn27-19 [Rivkah, Yaakov's mother, overheard her husband telling Esauv the firstborn to prepare a meal so that he could bless him. Rivkah tells Jacob, Esauv's younger brother to disguise as Esauv and bring a meal to his father, Isaac, in order that he receive the blessing. When Jacob comes to Isaac, Isaac asks him, "Who are you."] Jacob says to Isaac: I am Esauv your firstborn; I have done as you asked, please get up, I would like you to dine, I would like you to eat, so that you will bless me **Rashi:**

#1: I am Esauv: (Rashi) I (am me). Esauv is your first born.

Ibn Ezra: This is fantasy to, that Jacob said *I* slowly, then paused, and said, *Esauv is your first born* to avoid lying. In fact, we find many lies said by prophets. 1) Abraham lied that Sarah was his sister(Gn20); 2) Elishah told the servant of King Hadad to tell him "You will live" even though God showed him he will die (2K08-10); 3) Abraham who was going to sacrifice Isaac told his servants accompanying him, "We will bow and we will return." (Gn21:5)

Rashi, Our Approach #1: Clearly Ibn Ezra is correct; prophets lie. Therefore, the interpretation of Rashi "*I. Esauv is your firstborn*" is an incorrect interpretation. We call this the *form* of Rashi. A fundamental principle of our approach is that Rashi may not say what he means but instead phrase it in some clever fashion. This Rashi is one proof of this. For to interpret Rashi literally would make Rashi and Jacob look like total fools. To ascertain the *peshat* of the text we have to read it in its entirety. This is another technique in reading Rashi: *The beginning words* of Rashi (called the lemma) may only be partial. In this case Rashi is not commenting on *I am Esauv your firstborn*.

Rashi, our approach: Rashi is commenting on the both the totality of the passage and the contrast with Esauv's similar dialog with his father (Esauv also said: I am Esauv your first born...) Please see the comparative table below.

Verses	Phrase #1	Phrase #2	Phrase #3	Phrase #4	Phrase #5	Phrase #6
Gn29-17 Jacob	I (<i>anochi</i>) am Esauv your first born	I have done as you have asked	Please get up	Please dine	Please eat from my venison	So you can bless me
Gn29-32 Esauv	I (<i>ani</i>) am <u>your son</u> your firstborn Esauv		My father will get up		He will eat from the venison of his son	So you can bless me
Difference	Esauv acts like he is the only child (<u>your son</u>)	Jacob emphasizes caring "do what you asked"	Jacob more polite; Esauv more business like (you eat and then you bless)	Jacob emphasizes leisurely rate; he came not just for blessing to help father	Jacob gives a personal touch (my venison); Esauv emphasizes "my son"	
	Note: Jacob uses the caring I (<i>anochi</i>); Esauv uses the confrontational I (<i>ani</i>)					

Summary: To use Rashi's own pithy language: (Jacob is) caring (Caring I Anochi). But Esauv brings to you (business like). Rashi was *not* commenting on one phrase *I am Esauv your first born*; rather, Rashi was commenting on the *totality* of phrases showing an *overall* pattern emanating from omitted phrases, use of *please*, and *tone* as indicated by word sequence: The *overall* pattern is: Jacob cares for his father not just the blessing; contrastively Esauv only gives if he gets in return. We believe this Rashi typical in the Rashiyomi approach: There is a *peshat* but Rashi may not tell you everything he is commenting on and may phrase it in a catchy form which if interpreted literally would (as Ibn Ezra says) look like a fantasy.