

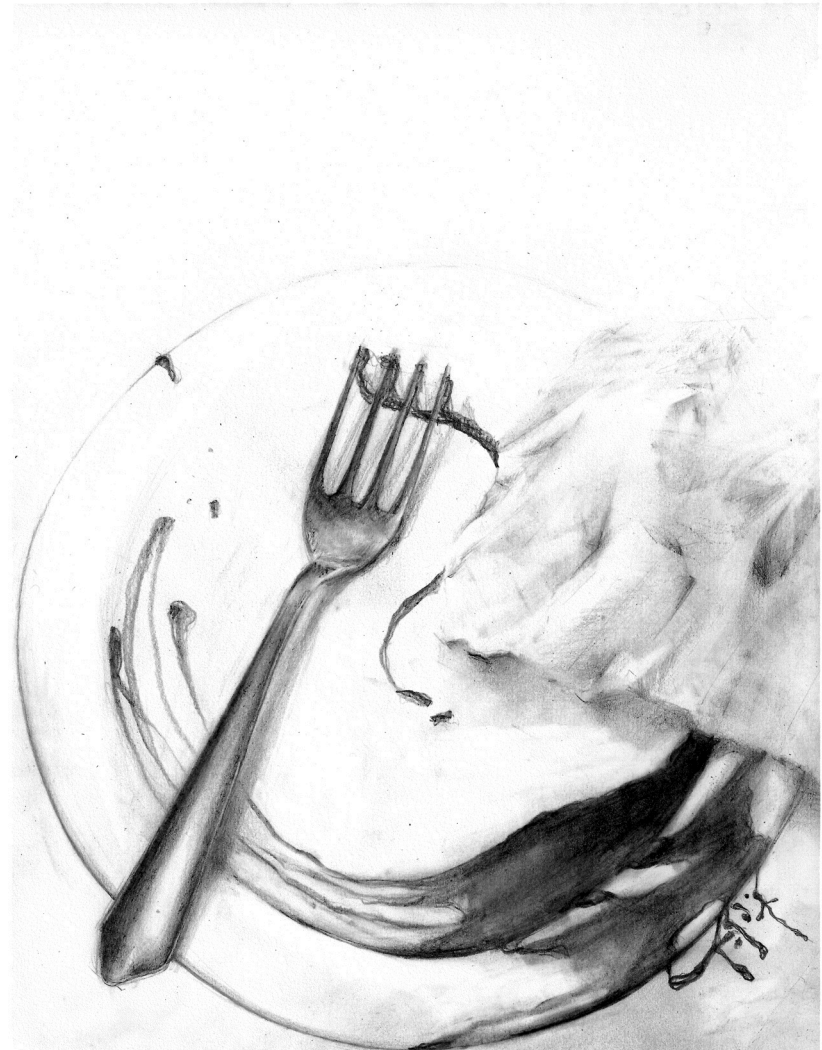
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THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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GENESIS 25:19-28:9

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Q1: What are the implications--literary, ethical, theological--of Isaac's quiet narrative presence? What is his place among the patriarchs and matriarchs?

Q2: As the midrash has it, Isaac looked exactly like his father. What makes him so strangely different and yet so uncannily similar to his father?

Q3: Isaac introduces agriculture to the family business (26:12). What makes him well suited to that kind of labor?

Q4: What is the difference between a birthright and a blessing?

Q5: Why does Esau work so hard as a hunter? Doesn't his wealthy father have enough domesticated animals to eat? Meanwhile, what does Jacob do when he's sitting in tents?

Q6: What is the root of Isaac's love for his son Esau? How can you explain their connection? What about Rebecca and Jacob?

Q7: Why does Esau sell his birthright? Is he the victim of exploitation, or does he genuinely not care about it? What can we know about his worldview?

Q8: Are Jacob's deceptions required by circumstance, or do they go to the root of his character? Should we think of deception as a moral problem?

Q9: How can a blessing be valid if predicated on a lie??

Q10: A lot depends on Isaac's sensory experience. For example, he seems to have a deep love for the experience of eating meat. Why does he trust his sense of touch (and smell, 27:27) over his sense of hearing? What does his blindness signify?

Q11: Before Jacob flees, Isaac actually blesses him again (the third blessing of the section), giving him the "blessing of Abraham." That actually seems like the best blessing! Did he always have it reserved for Jacob? If so, what is the consequence of stealing that other blessing?